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THE TREASURE OF LOST CAVE

A Boy Scout Story

BY

M. H. F. KINSEY

The Treasure

OF

LOST CAVE

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THE TREASURE OF LOST CAVE

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

"Remember, boys, this is to be no Pullman car affair—do you get me?"

This was Scoutmaster Bedford's parting shot to the scouts of Troop 1, Lawton, as they left him at the door of their troop headquarters on Friday night.

"Every fellow must be prepared to rough it in true pioneer style," he continued, "and be ready to start Monday morning at six sharp. So good night."

The scoutmaster referred to the hike which had been planned many months before: a ten day jaunt which would carry them to the celebrated Carter Caves in old Kentucky, familiarly known to tourists as "Marvel Land". (That is, such tourists as were brave enough to endure the privations of a real wilderness, and to escape the fire of suspicious and over-careful moonshiner.) It is rightly named

too, for the sights to be seen here are truly marvelous, and beyond the descriptive powers of man, but of that we shall speak with some length later.

The two following days were days of preparation and excitement with the Lawton scouts. Haversacks had to be packed, blankets rolled, provisions purchased, and a hundred and one details which go with such a trip.

But Monday morning found a round dozen of them ready, and standing in front of their troop headquarters at attention, awaiting marching orders from their chief: Scoutmaster Bedford.

There was Patrol Leader Stockton, "Fatty" Hoover, the Roth twins, and Adventurous Don Roberts. Timid Danny Winters, whose mama reluctantly consented at the last minute to let him go. Talkative Timmy Sullivan, better known under the non de plume of "Timbuctoo Tim." Silent Forest Davidson, who seldom spoke but observed much. "Chick" Raymond, just entering high school in a few days and feeling all the importance of a "freshy". Wetzel, Hess and Dobson made eleven, and—last but not intentionally so — Billy Bedford, son of the scoutmaster.

Three days' provision filled their haversacks. These were to be replenished en route as the need developed. A pair of blankets and an ax completed their equipment. "No more, or no less" were the

strict orders of Scoutmaster Bedford, but his words fell on at least one pair of deaf ears, or else his orders were deliberately disobeyed, for as he glanced around he saw "Fatty" Hoover struggling under the weight of an over-loaded haversack. In each hand he carried a good sized basket. On closer inspection the Scoutmaster discovered that these two baskets were filled with canned peaches, canned pears several well known brands of grocery store jam, and a variety of fancy cookies. "Fatty" was puffing like a freight engine on a steep grade. Mr. Bedford was vexed as could be plainly seen. So much so that he did not see the humor of the situation as the boys were seeing it, for they were now having much real sport at "Fatty's" expense, plying him with such questions as: "How long are you going to be gone, Fatty"? "Got any more room on that dray?" "Who did you buy out?" and the like.

As an experienced long distance hiker, Mr. Bedford knew full well that a fellow so heavily laden as "Fatty" was would prove a real hindrance on such a hike as this. The scoutmaster had now reached his side, and asked sharply: "Why all this load, sir? You heard my instructions Friday night, and why have you seen fit to disobey them?"

"Sir?"

"You heard me, Hoover—now answer my question."

Fatty had now relieved himself of the two baskets and was soon busy mopping the perspiration from his brow. He finally replied between puffs:

"Well, sir—I wan't calculatin' on starvin' while on this trip."

"That's very evident", Mr. Bedford responded, "you surely must know that we will pass farm houses and grocery stores on our way down."

"Well, sir", replied Fatty with a sort of lazy indifference, "you see I wan't goin' to take no chances."

"No, you never do, Hoover, when it comes to eating—but no further parley—you have ample provisions in your haversack—now I'll give you just ten minutes to get back to your home and rid yourself of those two baskets."

Mr. Bedford glanced at his wrist watch, and then back at the boy, as he asked: "What say you?"

Fatty hesitated a moment and as a deep frown covered his face, he drawled out: "Well, I guess if I have to, I have to."

It took Fatty less than ten minutes to carry out his scoutmaster's orders, and soon the gladsome command of "Forward" was heard, and the long looked for hike had become a reality.

The first three days out were without incident, and the hikers for the most part were passing thru a section of country familiar to their eyes. It was.

on the fourth day, however, that new scenes began to appear as they struck the trail leading thru the hills to Tygart Valley. They entered this valley at the very headwaters of Tygart River, the stream on which they had planned to camp. Numerous small caves began to show up, and while they only extended back underground a few feet they were of interest nevertheless, and the scouts halted many times to explore these miniature caverns and to inspect the many unique rock and crystal formations. The entire length of Tygart thru which they had passed seemed fairly honeycombed with these small caverns, and there was real joy experienced by these youthful pedestrians, for they knew now that they had at last reached the cave country.

CHAPTER II.

THE LEGEND OF LOST CAVE.

The Cliffs of Tygart were reached near dusk but were still plainly visible. Like silent sentinels they rose up in the somber twilight casting their dark shadows upon the limpid waters below. The scouts were enjoying every step of the hike thru this wonderful valley, and a real thrill possessed them when Scoutmaster Bedford commanded them to halt, announcing that they would pitch camp here for the night. A more ideal spot could not have been chosen. Bubbling out of the side of the hill was the sparkling water of a mountain spring. Piles of driftwood had been washed ashore, which the boys were soon dragging in preparatory to building fires. But before these were started the entire bunch had disrobed, and were soon bathing their weary bodies in the cool waters of Tygart.

Shortly following this very delightful experience a half dozen or more fires were started, and soon the delicious odor of frying bacon permeated the air, and Oh boys—what a feast!

Don Roberts was not only the adventurer of the bunch but philosopher as well and it was he who asked Mr. Bedford, in the course of the meal, what he thought heaven was like.

"Why, Roberts, I can't say that I ever gave the subject very much thought. You know I think there is so much to enjoy right here in this present world that we can have heaven three hundred and sixty-five days out of the year if we are of a mind to. Why—what is your conception of heaven?"

"Well — you know, Mr. Bedford, I was just a thinkin' it might be a campin' out like this."

"You may not be so very far from the truth, my boy. I am willing to admit that it would be heaven for me, and I believe I voice the sentiments of every true scout—certainly those who are on this hike."

More thrills were experienced that night as the scoutmaster and his twelve charges gathered around the blazing campfire and related story after story of adventure. But the best was reserved for the last when Mr. Bedford threw another large fagot on the fire and started his story:

"Boys—tomorrow we will reach the Carter Caves if no ill luck befalls us, and I thought possibly a little advance story about them tonight might interest you, and increase your desire a little more to see them and explore them. You will find four very large caverns in the group: "Bat Cave"; "X-Cave"; "Laurel", and "Swindlers". I will not describe them now, for you will soon see them, but I thought it might interest you to know a little something about their origin. I had the pleasure a few

summers ago of visiting these caverns at the time a very celebrated geologist was exploring them, and he claimed for them an age of over one hundred thousand years, establishing the fact that they are pre-glacial. He pointed out a number of stalagmites which were over ten feet in circumference, at their base, and rising to a height of over six feet. This gives you some idea of the age of these caves when we learn that stalagmites and stalactites are said to grow barely an inch in a thousand years. We know very little about the discovery of these caves, but it is a well known fact that they were being visited not so many years following the Revolutionary War. Also that they were the favorite haunts of many Indian tribes. Our guide will point out to us when we visit "Bat Cave" the exact spot where Daniel Boone slept one night. Of course much of this is only tradition and it is difficult to find out just how much is true and how much is not. But I had almost forgotten to tell you what I had started out to—and that is about the legend of Lost Cave, for there is a legend that there were originally five caves in this group, but many years ago one of them very mysteriously disappeared from view. Of course we are somewhat skeptical about accepting this story, and yet such a thing is not improbable. Large boulders rolling down the hillside might have covered the entrance, or the en-

trance itself might have caved in, and become entirely hidden from view. Such a thing, I say, is not improbable. The Indian adds a slight variation to this legend by telling us that there is a chest of gold to be found in this cave, and happy is the man who discovers it."

"Now, boys, that is all for tonight. I see it is growing late; we are all very tired, and I now suggest that we roll up in our blankets and dream about these mysterious caverns which we shall soon visit.

Long after the rest had fallen asleep that night, Don Roberts lay awake thinking of the legend told by the Scoutmaster around the campfire. The others had dismissed it from their minds immediately as a sort of myth or fairy tale, but not so with Don. To him Lost Cave was a reality. In his mind's eye he could picture its every detail: its entrance; its spacious chambers; its crystal formations—yes, and its chest of gold too. He was growing restless; his heart was beating a regular tattoo, and he longed for dawn when he could press on once more toward the goal of his desire.

Presently all sounds grew fainter and he was soon fast asleep and dreaming of the wonderful things his mind had visualized that night. But it did not seem long, for he was rudely awakened by the reveille. He opened his eyes and found that it was

good daylight, and he scampered out of his blankets for his morning dip, and was soon ready for breakfast.

CHAPTER III.

A RUN IN WITH MOONSHINERS.

Just as the sun was peeping over the Cliffs of Tygart, the merry hikers were once more on the march with faces set steadfastly towards Carter—the land of caves. Shortly before noon they came in sight of the first real signs of civilization they had witnessed since entering Tygart Valley. It was a little hamlet with a cross roads store, two farm houses, and a blacksmith shop. It was evidently a village of some importance as a half dozen or more farmers sat on the porch of the little store engaged in earnest conversation. As the scouts halted in front they observed a crude sign just over the door which read:

BIG BEND POST OFFICE.

The little postoffice stood near the mouth of a small creek, also named Big Bend, and which emptied into Tygart at this point.

Mr. Bedford managed to catch one sentence of the conversation of the little group which occupied the porch as he drew up in front of the store. It fell from the lips of the eldest of the party, a tall rawboned farmer, who had risen to his feet and was shaking his head and index finger vigorously as he exclaimed in excited tones:

"They air Revenooers I tells yer. Mark my wurruds, they be Revenooers."

The conversation came to an abrupt ending as Mr. Bedford and the scouts drew a pace nearer, and the old farmer turned and faced them with a sullen look.

Mr. Bedford after giving the command, "halt", addressed the group courteously:

"Will you gentlemen be so kind as to tell me how far it is to the Carter Caves?"

The old farmer, who seemed to be spokesman for the group replied with curt sarcasm:

"Air yer shore it's ther Carter Caves yer lookin' fur?"

He then braced himself up full length, folded his arms, and awaited Mr. Bedford's answer. Mr. Bedford was puzzled at the farmer's attitude, and he could not quite understand it. He hardly knew what to say, but he finally regained his composure and spoke in just as courteous tones as he had before:

"Yes sir—the Carter Caves is most assuredly our destination, and we would like to know the distance there. We had hoped to reach there before nightfall."

The old farmer's eyes were fairly snapping by this time, and when Mr. Bedford had finished, said:

"Wal, stranger, we Kaintuckians over hyar on Big

Bend don't waste many wurruds on a low sneakin' bunch o' spies."

Mr. Bedford seemed perfectly dumbfounded—but not long, for it dawned upon him like a flash what the true situation was. He now remembered the words of the farmer, which were spoken as he and the scouts approached them, and he could scarcely repress as mile.

"So they think we are a band of revenue officers, do they?" he thought—"Well I'd much rather they wouldn't if all the reports I've heard about moonshiners on Big Bend be true."

Before Mr. Bedford could reply to the irate old farmer, and explain just who they were, and what their mission was, he broke out again:

"We uns is peaceable citizens over hyar on Big Bend, and we don't perpose to have any blankety-blank bunch o' spies allus stickin' thar noses 'n our bizness. Thars ther road—I ain't keerin' which way you uns go, but—git jest as fur from Big Bend as yer gander shanks'll take yer. Do you git me?"

"But"—Mr. Bedford broke in, "allow me to explain, we—"

"Naw, naw," the old farmer interrupted. "I knowed a feller once that cum 'long Big Bend on jest sech bizness as you uns have cum, an' he hung back ter splain, an' I kin show yer his grave ef yer keer to see it."

Mr. Bedford realized that further argument would only make matters worse, and turning to the scouts gave the command, "Forward-March".

With silent but quick tread they soon marched out of what looked to both scoutmaster and scouts as an exceedingly dangerous situation.

The news of their coming seemed to have gone before them in some mysterious way and every now and then a man would roll out of the bushes with a gun and look at them with much suspicion and some wonder.

"I don't like this a bit, Mr. Bedford," whimpered timid Danny Winters, "why can't we go back?"

But Mr. Bedford did not have to rack his brain for a consoling answer, for Don Roberts, who was always equal to any occasion, spoke up: "You poor little boob—go back you say? why to go back means swift and certain death. Didn't you hear what all that guy said back there? never—let's go forward, for if we run this gauntlet safely we'll find the treasure out there in Lost Cave, and then we'll buy this whole bloomin' valley out and order Mr. Who-ever-he-is to vacate and chase him down this river with a whole regiment of our hired soldiers and machine guns. I say, 'forward'—"

Don's words were like a tonic and soon the whole bunch had dropped their seriousness and were laughing at the philosophy of this youthful optimist.

They made good time and by sundown were rounding out their last five miles. The spirit of the bunch was fine—even to Danny Winters—and they were singing songs, giving their troop yells and having a royal good time in general—when all at once they were called to attention by a blast from their scoutmaster's whistle. They immediately obeyed the command.

"Boys", Mr. Bedford began, "see those clouds? We are in for a storm, and a hard one too, I fear. Let's double-quick for a few minutes, and perhaps we will come to a cabin where we can take shelter."

They were again in a sparsely settled section, and had not passed a cabin for fully an hour. They were now in a quick trot in spite of their heavy packs, and staging a race with the approaching storm. It was not long before a ragged line of fire cut thru the blackness overhead and the thunder began to crash and the rain to fall.

CHAPTER IV.

DON GAINS VALUABLE INFORMATION.

Mr. Bedford was looking intently as they jogged along for a cliff or cave where they might find shelter, but none could he see. All were getting a good drenching, and now finding it hard to keep the pace, but like true scouts they were making the best of an unpleasant situation without so much as a murmur. To such there is always a reward, and it came to them speedily, for as they reached the crest of the hill they spied the cheering outlines of a log cabin not far away, and there went up a mighty yell. They were not long in reaching it and at a peaked gate Mr. Bedford shouted:

"Hello!"

"Hello!" was the answer which came from a middle-aged woman who opened the door. She was barefooted and in her mouth was a pipe. Hovering close to her were three little girls and a boy with yellow hair and bare feet, who gazed curiously at the strange visitors.

"Will you be so kind as to give us shelter from the storm?" asked Mr. Bedford.

"Yes, stranger, ef you uns kin all crowd inter ther cabin. She's a leakin' powfully bad but you uns is welcome."

The woman's simple hospitality was quite a contrast to the treatment they had received from the farmer at the cross roads store and Mr. Bedford was ready to believe now that Kentucky hospitality was not a myth after all. The thirteen of them were soon filing into the little cabin which consisted of one lone room with two small windows. A big wood fire lighted the room, and the only furniture visible was a cane bottom chair, a small table and two beds. The roof was leaking in more than one place, and on each bed a tin bucket had been placed to catch the dripping water. The boys huddled together in the more protected spots, and were soon taking an interested survey of the situation.

"I reckon you hain't had nothin' to eat?" asked the woman, addressing Mr. Bedford. "I'se jest set up a leetle snack here which you uns is welcome to."

On a nearby table Mr. Bedford glanced at the meal which consisted of fat streaks of bacon swimming in grease, corn pone, potatoes, and sour milk. It was far from tempting, and the scoutmaster assured her that they were not hungry, having eaten a hearty meal at the noon hour.

Mr. Bedford then related to the woman his experience at the cross roads store, and he had scarcely finished when she snatched her pipe from her mouth,

and gave utterance to an exclamation of contempt, as she said:

"Ef I hain't badly fooled, stranger, I b'leve I kin name that air devil."

Mr. Bedford looked at her with some surprise.

"That air be old Jud Holbrook shore's yer livin'. Devil Jud they calls him in these hyar parts, an' he's a pow'ful bad man, stranger—a pow'ful bad man."

She then related a very pathetic story of how he had a number of years before wrested from her a piece of property by intimidation and right down dishonesty.

"N' me a widder-woman, too", she concluded, "the devil'll shore git him."

"Yes, that's true," replied Mr. Bedford, "but I'd like to see the law get him first." Then he asked:

"Is he a moonshiner?"

She hesitated a moment, and then answered:

"That air I don't know, but spicions strong agin him, fer he never lets any one cum up Big Bend 'less he knows 'em powfully well. Some revenooers wuz shot thar a while back an' they say old Jud and his gang did it."

"Man alive"—broke out Don Roberts, "let the congregation rise and sing a hymn of praise for their deliverance. Is there another way home, kind lady?"

"Thar mought be," she answered, "I don't know

—but you uns keep jest as fur away from Devil Jud as you kin—he's a powful bad man."

But Don's interest was not in Devil Jud. He was itching to find out more about Lost Cave, and he was led to ask:

"How far are the Carter Caves from here?"

"Why, sonny, they's jest over th' hill thar," and she pointed out the little window. "When yer gits to ther bottom of ther hill yer cross over Tygart and right up Cave Branch is ther caves. I 'lowed you uns wuz goin' thar."

Don interrogated further:

"Did you ever hear of Lost Cave?"

She gave a low chuckle, and replied:

"I'se hear'n tell of it. Yer see my old gran' pap owned them air caves once, but got cheated out o' 'em—, an' I hain't got much interest in 'em fer that reason. Thars a pack er papers 'bout 'em in that air old chist under ther bed, but you see, sonny, I'se ignorant; I can't read 'em."

Don jumped to his feet and was all excitement as he exclaimed:

"I can, lady—I can."

"Naw, sonny—them air sacret, an' I knows my old gran' pap wouldn't want strangers peerin' inter 'em. I keeps 'em fer his sake."

Don was about to insist on seeing them, but a nod from Mr. Bedford prevented.

The storm had passed and the faint rays of a dying sunset cast its red glow on the horizon.

"Can we get to the caves before dark?" Mr. Bedford asked.

"Oh, yes—," she replied, "you can git thar afore dark."

Thanking her for her hospitality Mr. Bedford and his scouts bade her good by and started down the long hill, dropping at once into the thick dark woods below. The farther they went the deeper was the gloom. The sun had now set, and it was growing darker each moment. The path was steep and coiled downward like a serpent, finally leading to a small suspension bridge which spanned the silvery waters of Tygart. Crossing over they started up Cave Branch, and here is where their troubles began. The road (if it could be termed such) followed the creek bed in a criss cross route. Bad enough in daylight, but doubly worse at night. The rocks were slippery and more than one hiker experienced a good cold bath before reaching their destination. At exactly nine o'clock the joyous news was shouted back from scout to scout: "We have reached the caves, hurrah!" By the aid of flash lights they soon found a small cave, and in this they took shelter for the night.

CHAPTER V.

TRIP THRU BAT CAVE.

The scouts' first day at Carter Caves was spent in exploring the four caverns of this group: "X-Cave"; "Laurel Cave"; "Swindler's", and "Bat Cave." It is the latter which is monarch of them all, so named because of the great number of bats which inhabit it during the winter months. It has been the subject of many legends and stories. This wonderful cavern pierces the bowels of the earth to a maximum depth of seven and one-half miles, and rivals the splendors of the far famed Mammoth group . The entire distance is a labyrinth of underground passages skilfully carved by nature thru solid rock. Its huge stalactites resemble giant icicles suspended from the roof of the cavern. Its white crystal stalagmites rise up like ghosts in the jet blackness which envelops the cave. The entrance is made from the side of a hill after a climb of fifty feet over huge boulders which have fallen from the roof at its mouth. You begin to feel the chilling air at once, and your thick wool sweater is none too warm. After your strenuous climb you find your guide awaiting you with lanterns all lit ready for the great adventure.

The guide requested the calling of the roll of all present so that a check could be kept on the sight-

seers during their seven and one-half mile trip underground.

"Why is this necessary?" asked Mr. Bedford.

"Well, it is an easy matter to get lost in a cave which is honeycombed as this one is with passageways, and one which extends back under the earth to such a great depth. I play the game safe, and take no chances."

Mr. Bedford drew from his pocket his camp roster and called the name of each boy. It was a weird experience, and a kind of shiver passed thru the crowd, but none expressed a desire to turn back.

Just a few feet from the entrance you pass into one of the many huge chambers with its arched stone roof, and its thousands of glistening stalactites. It seems you have been transported all at once into the very heart of Fairy Land, and your eyes involuntarily seek the forms of elves, fairies and the like. You are then halted by your guide and he points out to you, "Echo River," a small lake of unusual depth. He then drops a stone into the water, and you can hear the echo from the splash four distinct times.

You then pass into the spacious Ball Room, a chamber of considerable size. Overhead huge stalactites hang from the ceiling like great chandeliers. On either side are perfectly formed galleries, which the guide will tell you are nothing more or less than

great crevices leading into innumerable passage-ways yet undiscovered.

Daniel Boone's Bed Chamber is the next thing of interest. Here you see a formation resembling the old fashioned teester bed and the exact spot where Daniel Boone spent a night when Red Men were hot on his trail.

Then you enter a narrow passage called, "Fat Man's Misery," which is a good half mile long. The first quarter of a mile you are compelled to crawl on hands and knees, and on stomach some of the way to keep from scraping your back, and the leaner one happens to be the better he will fare. With Fatty Hoover it was one continuous groan from start to finish.

After covering a distance of five miles the scouts came to what looked like a stair way leading up to a cavern about twenty feet above. The guide called this the entrance to Secret Chamber or Ghost Chamber. It is some climb too, but finally you reach the top and enter another chamber equally as large as the ball room, and the guide informs you that you are now in Secret Chamber, where you will be given the rare privilege of communing with the spirits of the departed. He then has you extinguish every light, and soon you are in total darkness. He commands every one to be still and hear the silence. It is ghastly. He then relates the legend of Secret

Chamber: a blood curdling story of a brutal husband who led his wife into this chamber and then left her there to perish.

"Boys", he continued, "it is said that you can see her spirit in the form of a streak of light if you watch close enough. Look close, now—can you see it?"

There was a few moments silence and soon the death like stillness was broken by a howl of despair which sent a shudder thru the little group. Could it be the wail of a departed spirit? Not at all. Nestling in the arms of Scoutmaster Bedford was the trembling form of Danny Winters whose nerves had been tested to their limit, and his wild shriek had apprised the others of the fact. Mr. Bedford consoled him as best he could, telling him that they would soon be outside again; to brace up, and be a man. His words seemed to have the desired effect, and once more silence reigned and all were eagerly watching for the mystic light again.

"I see it—I see it."

It was a voice all recognized at once: that of Don. Roberts.

The guide then lit his lantern and walking up to Don's side extended to him his hand.

"What's that for?" asked Don.

"Why, sir, to congratulate you. I have guided thousands of tourists thru this chamber the past

eight years, and you, sir, have the exceptional honor of being the first to ever see that light."

There was a confused look upon the boy's face which quickly changed to one of chagrin as the crowd began to give him the horse laugh and accuse him of "seein' things."

Their ridicule didn't phase Don in the least and he stuck it out to the very last that he saw the light quite distinctly.

Returning down the rocky stair-way all drew a sigh of relief for none of them seemed to have any desire whatever to prolong their stay in Secret Chamber. Passing thru another large chamber they came to the biggest body of water in Bat Cave, known as "Devil's Lake." This is twenty-five feet deep in some places with an ice temperature, and is the real source of Cave Branch. Following this underground stream for a half mile they came to the rear entrance of the great cavern, and to the end of one of the greatest experiences of their lives. It was near the midnight hour when they reached camp, and as they approached the guide's home they heard strange voices. On arriving at the gate they found three men on horseback, who were awaiting the guide. After an exchange of greetings the men informed the guide that they had been in the saddle all day and were very tired, and would like to secure lodging for the night. As a true Kentuck-

ian never turns a man away from his home they were told to alight, and as the elder of the group stepped to the ground and extended his hand to the guide, the latter recognized him and spoke cordially:

"Oh, it's you Sheriff Ratcliff—glad to see you. What are you doing way down in these parts?"

"Same bizness as allus brings me down hyar," and he gave a little chuckle. "Jest gittin' ready for a little round-up. Licker's been flowin' outer this hyar valley a bit too free of late."

He then whispered in the guide's ear—the latter replying audibly: "Oh, you needn't mind these fellows They are boy scouts who are down here to see the Caves. They will never divulge any of your plans. On the other hand they might be of material assistance to you. You can set them to scouting for moonshiners," and he laughed.

"Purty good idee," the sheriff responded. "hit's five hundred dollars fer ye boys ef ye kin round up the devils thet's convertin' this good old Kaintucky corn inter bug house juice—what sez ye?"

As he propounded this question he brought his hand down vigorously on the shoulder of Don Roberts who was standing just in front of him, apparently very much interested in all that he was saying.

Don made no reply until he felt the tight grip of

the old sheriff's hand upon his shoulder, as he asked the second time, "What sez ye?"

"Look a here, mister," the boy responded, "we are not down here huntin' for trouble; we are down here to find Lost Cave."

The old sheriff indulged in a hearty laugh, which Don thought savored of ridicule.

"Well, what's funny?" Don asked.

"Aw nuthin' in pertickler, only I'd hate like the devil fer my board and lodgin' ter depend on findin' that fake cave. Findin' these hyar moonshiners, sonny, is shore money."

"Yes," Don replied—, "and if I've been rightly informed it's sure death a lots of times too, isn't it?"

"Wal, sonny, they haint never got me yit, an' I'se bin in ther game a powful long time."

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTURED BY DEVIL JUD.

Mr. Bedford was rudely awakened from his slumbers the next morning by the shrill cry of some one on the outside of the cave. His first impulse was to ignore it as he had gotten to sleep late the night before, but he quickly changed his mind on hearing a volley of oaths now directed at him and the scouts for their late sleeping. He wondered who it could be, so he quickly threw his blankets off and walked to the entrance of the cave where he saw a boy about sixteen years of age astride a gray mule, and pulling vigorously at a corn cob pipe. Mr. Bedford was angered by the fellow's boldness as could be plainly seen, and asked sharply:

"Well, what do you want?"

"Lands sake—I tho't ther whole bloomin' bunch of ye wuz dead," and then broke out swearing again.

Mr. Bedford hurried down to where the boy was, and grabbing him by the shoulder, said:

"Look here, young man, swearing doesn't go around here. Who are you, and what do you want?"

The boy quickly released himself from the tight grip of the scoutmaster, and with a scowl on his face, replied:

"Be keerful, stranger, keep yer hands off'n ther United States Government, or I'll have ye caged."

"Ah, is that so? So you are the whole United States Government, are you?" and Mr. Bedford's anger now changed to mirth, and he laughed heartily.

"I had no idea that I was addressing such an important personage, but where do you get that government stuff?"

"Funny is it?" I don't see anything so derned funny," the boy broke in, "I'm the mail man an' I'm not to be tampered with. Does you git me?" and he emphasized his remarks as he brought his hand down on a well worn mail pouch which was attached to his saddle.

"Oh, I see," Mr. Bedford replied, "but the fact that you are the mail man doesn't license you to disturb the rest of peaceable citizens and insult them with your vile oaths."

His remarks did not abash the boy in the least and he asked Mr. Bedford if he and the scouts had any mail to go out.

"You'll find our mail down there in the box on the road-side, and hereafter don't go out of your way to solicit us, and above all you'll have to cut out that swearing when your business does bring you here."

"Does ye know who ye air a talkin' to?" the boy asked.

"No—and I don't care a rap."

"Well pardner ye air addressin' a Holbrook, an' a Holbrook takes nuff'n off'n nobody."

"I don't care if you are the Kaiser of Germany," Mr. Bedford replied heatedly. "When you visit this camp you will be compelled to comply with its rules and regulations the same as my own boys do, or out you go. Is that plain?"

"It's derned plain—so plain that somebody's goin' to make yer swaller every word of it afore ye leaves hyar."

"Your threat doesn't alarm me in the least," Mr. Bedford replied as he turned and walked back into the cave.

"Holbrook is it?" he was saying to himself, "Holbrook—Oh yes," and he remembered the incident at the Cross Roads Store two days before. "No doubt this young reprobate is a near relative of the famous Devil Jud. It's a dead cinch we haven't the well wishes of the Holbrook clan, but we shan't let that mar the pleasure of our visit down here."

He found the scouts up and dressing, and soon all were preparing breakfast in true pioneer fashion.

After breakfast Mr. Bedford announced that scouting games would be the order of the morning, the first being the treasure hunt. He stated further

that the treasure, which was a big juicy watermelon, had been hidden at a certain spot, and three routes of equal distance led to it. The twelve scouts were divided into three groups of four each. Group one would start from the big gate leading to the guide's home. Group two would start from the big oak tree near the spring, and Group three would follow the little brook emptying into Cave Branch near Laurel Cave. Mr. Bedford explained that the first clew would be written and posted at the starting point, but after that the hunters would have to depend entirely on signs which most of them had familiarized themselves with by reading the Boy Scout Handbook. At a blast from the scoutmaster's whistle, the game was on, and the scouts started on their quest with real, genuine enthusiasm.

Don Roberts selected as his three companions, Forest Davidson, and the Roth twins, and they chose the third route which led up the rocky little stream which terminated at Cave Branch. It was by far the most difficult route to traverse, but Don chose it because it happened to be the least traveled, and he thought his chances for finding Lost Cave greater. On reaching the place where the search was to begin in earnest, the boys spied a piece of paper tacked to a large oak tree, which they recognized as their first clew. It read as follows: "Follow the bed of the stream to Fern Bridge,

and search underneath it for your next clew." The boys had heard of this bridge but had never seen it. They knew it was a natural bridge which spanned this little brook known as Fern Brook, and they were eager to see it. It was one of the many interesting places to be found at Carter Caves. They had only been hiking a little over fifteen minutes when they came in sight of this wonderful natural span, which rises to the height of over two hundred feet and is literally covered with ferns and drooping vines. Such a sight they had never beheld before and they stood before this great work of nature in deep wonderment. They were soon busy looking for their next clew, and so intent were they in their search that all talking had ceased, and every available space around and under the bridge was being carefully inspected. Thus they searched for fully a half hour, and then it was that the treasure seekers began to manifest impatience. Don Roberts was the first to speak:

"Well, fellers, it looks like we are Jonah'd. I can't see a bloomin' sign to guide us any place."

He had scarcely finished his sentence when Davidson shouted with glee:

"Oh, looka here," and he directed the boys' gaze to a large rock on which a smaller one had been placed and to the right of these two was another. Every boy in the group readily recognized the sign

and its meaning, for all were Second Class scouts, and were quite proficient in tracking.

"It means," Don cried out, "to turn abruptly to the right—but land's sake, that means to climb up that precipice. Can we make it?"

"Sure, sure," the trio replied.

"All right then, fellers, follow me."

With that the four boys began their weary climb up the rocky hillside, and it was some strenuous feat too, and not without its dangers. But they made it, and gave a sigh of relief when they had safely reached the top, and gazed down into the dizzy depths below. They were soon busy searching for the next clew which proved less difficult than the one under the bridge, for on reaching the top of the cliff their eyes immediately fell on two rows of small stones which formed a perfect "V"; the point of the V showing them their next direction, which brought them to a well beaten path which led thru a dense forest. Don cautioned his followers to keep their eyes open for further signs, for he felt sure they would soon observe some sign which would lead them off the path. Sure enough, he was right, for they had only traveled a few hundred yards when they spied a forked stick driven in their path and in the prongs was a slender pole six feet long pointing to the left.

"Here's the turn off, fellers," Don shouted back,

and on reaching it he turned to the left and found himself in the midst of a veritable jungle of briars, and a network of clinging vines. The latter stretched across their path like strands of wire, and they found it difficult to force a passage. Legs, hands, and faces were badly scratched and bleeding profusely, but they pressed forward in spite of these obstacles. At that moment there came a loud peal of thunder, and on looking upward the boys observed dark clouds filling the heavens, and they realized that they were in for a hard storm, and they halted for amoment to debate the best course to pursue.

"It's a dead cinch," Don spoke up, that we'll get wringing wet if we keep on, and we are too far from camp to turn back, besides we don't want to turn back after coming this far. I suggest that we build a lean-to as quickly as we can, and that will shelter us until the storm has passed."

This plan carried unanimously and they soon found two trees situated about eight feet apart, and chopping a small sapling of no value, they stretched it from one tree to the other. They then found enough dead material which they used as poles for the frame work of their shack, and then followed the cutting of soft, thick tips of trees for the roof, which they thatched to the frame work of poles, and lo as snug a shelter as any one would wish was

built and completed in a little less than a half hour, and that wasn't a minute too early, for they had scarcely seated themselves under its protecting roof until the storm broke in all its fury, and the rain came down in torrents. It was a hard driving rain, but it did not penetrate the improvised shelter so quickly erected by these four resourceful scouts.

"Now for eats," Don suggested, and the bunch was soon partaking of a noon-day snack which they had been thoughtful enough to bring along.

By two o'clock the storm had passed and they again resumed their search for the hidden treasure. Their route now led down a steep embankment which brought them a few minutes later to another creek bed which had dried up. Here they found their fifth clew, like unto the second: a large rock on which there lay a smaller, and a third rock beside these on the right. Don was all excitement, and he cried out:

"Fellers, this is where we turn back towards camp. I am almost positive of that. I believe this creek bed will lead us in that direction. May kind Providence make our search a successful one. This way—"

"Mebbe not."

It was a strange voice which uttered these words,

and the boys were craning their necks in all directions to find out from whence it came.

Mebbe not, I sez," and this time the speaker stepped out from behind a large tree, and to their amazement stood Devil Jud Holbrook. The boys turned pale from fright as might be expected. The old man was drenching wet from the recent shower. He carried a shot gun on his right shoulder, and a fiendish expression covered his face.

"You'ns ez some smart detectives, I must say," he broke out again. "I'se bin kiverin ye ever since ye left Fern Bridge 'n nary one of ye as seed or heerd me, har, har, har—Oh Lawd."

"Sir"—Don replied, "we lay no claims to being detectives."

"Ez that so. How er bout spies?"

"We are not spies either, but Boy Scouts playing one of our games."

"Devilish funny games — this hyar lookin' fer tracks an' searchin' behin' brush piles an' the lak. Call yerself scouts, does ye? Thet's jest a perlite name atter all fer spy. I know what ye air doin' hyar, yer spying fer thet cowardly, sneakin', low down hound thet calls his self a sheriff. Haint et so?"

"Emphatically no," Don promptly replied, "and what's more, I challenge you to prove it."

If there was any fear in the boy now it was cer-

tainly not evident, and he faced his accuser with the courage of a Daniel.

"Now don't git sassy," the old man continued, "I'se gotta place fer sich as ye—now 'spose ye turn and go 'tother way er while."

"No, we won't," Don replied defiantly. "We take orders from no one this week but our Scoutmaster, least of all from a stranger."

"I sez fer ther last time, you'ns turn 'n march down ther crick bed," and he raised his gun and deliberately pointed it at the boys. Don had heard enough about Devil Jud Holbrook to know that it was not safe to provoke him too far, so he turned to obey the command, but not without protest. As he started off he hurled this at the old man: "The gun gives you the advantage. You are not playin' the game on the square."

CHAPTER VII.

PRISONERS.

Mr. Bedford awaited the return of the treasure seekers with unusual interest. He realized it was a splendid test of their powers of observation, and he was anxious to see who would win out in this spirited contest. It was far past the noon hour and as yet not a scout had returned, but he remembered the hard storm at noon, and he realized that this would halt them in their search. Presently he heard cheering in the distance, and looking down the road, he saw four scouts approaching with the coveted treasure. It was Patrol Leader Stockton and his aggregation—lucky boys. The scoutmaster hurried out to meet them and shook their hands in hearty congratulation.

"Well, boys," he said, "to the victor belongs the spoils, so open 'er up, and eat to your heart's content."

They were just in the act of obeying orders when they spied Wetzel and his three descending the hill opposite camp with a dejected look upon their faces. They seemed in no special hurry to reach camp for they were witnessing the celebration now taking place by the winning team, and they did not relish the embarrassment which naturally falls to the losers in a contest. But they were game losers,

and took their medicine with calm resignation, and reported to the scoutmaster that they had reached their destination, but not until after the treasure had been found, and carried off by Patrol Leader Stockton's team.

"But," continued Wetzel, addressing the Scoutmaster, "our team, as well as Don Roberts' was handicapped in this contest as can be plainly seen."

"Why so?" quickly asked Mr. Bedford with surprise.

"Because Stockton had Fatty Hoover on his team."

"Well, what of it?"

"Well, Mr. Bedford, you know as well as the rest of us guys know that that Fatty Hoover's got as keen a scent for findin' eats as any setter pup that was ever born. Just as soon as I learned that the treasure was something to eat I knew it was a sure win for Stockton's team, and good night for the rest of us."

Mr. Bedford gave a hearty laugh, and then remarked:

"But it was Stockton, I believe, who unearthed the treasure from its hiding place."

"No—No," Stockton interrupted, "you have the wrong dope. Fatty was the boy. That's the gospel truth."

At this remark the whole bunch indulged in a good, hearty round of laughter."

By this time the subject of their jests had his face buried in the second big slice of luscious melon, and he presented a picture of perfect contentment.

"I can't understand," spoke up Mr. Bedford, "why Roberts and his bunch have not returned. It is now past four o'clock. I trust they have not lost their way."

"Roberts would be the hardest fellow in this gang to lose," replied Stockton. "I'll venture to say he gave up the water melon hunt for bigger game—for instance a Lost Cave, for that guy's been nutty over findin' that cave ever since you related the legend at our campfire the other night. Don't waste any worry on that kid—like the bad penny, he'll turn up O. K."

"Surely he doesn't take that legend seriously, does he?" asked Mr. Bedford.

"Most assuredly. He's confident in his belief that such a cave exists and equally as confident that he'll find it."

"Well, all I have to say is that he has a fine imagination."

"Yes, and lots of disappointment coming to him too," added the skeptical Timmy Sullivan.

Night came and still Roberts and his companions had not shown up, and Mr. Bedford made no effort to conceal his anxiety. He found his way to the

guide's home and laid the matter before him, and sought his counsel.

"Well it's possible for them to have lost their way," the guide replied, "but they would sooner or later reach a farm house. I would make no effort to search for them tonight, for they are big enough to take care of themselves. If they don't turn up by nine o'clock tomorrow we can start a searching party for them, going over the route you marked out for them in their game. Don't worry, everything will turn out all right, I'm sure."

Mr. Bedford realized that the last part of this advice was easier spoken than it was fulfilled, for he could not help but worry, knowing that he, and he alone, was responsible for the welfare of the twelve scouts now in camp with him.

Devil Jud Holbrook led his captives down the barren creek bed to Tygart River, and then they entered a small skiff, and rowed across to the opposite side where they landed, and started their tramp up Big Bend Creek. It was a trying experience for the boys, for they were conscious of the fact that they were in the hands of a man who had the reputation of being an outlaw and a terror to revenue officers. They knew no appeal which they might make would soften his heart or cause him to show the least mercy. Don was the only one of the group not entirely

downcast over their unhappy situation. He chatted quite cheerily at intervals, and his seeming indifference to his present plight seemed to annoy Devil Jud quite a little, and the old man was moved to ask:

"You dern little chatterbox, don't you nevah git tired er runnin' thet jib o' your'n? Shet up 'n move 'long faster."

Don looked back at him and snapped his eyes as he said:

"I am an American citizen, and I believe in free speech."

"Ah ye duz, duz ye? Wal thars no free speech fer ye on Big Bend."

"Do you mean to tell me," the boy continued, "that Big Bend is a separate and distinct country from the United States? It does seem so, I must admit, from the manner in which we are being treated. Your rule here would make the Kaiser green with envy."

"Did'n I tell ye to shet up," Devil Jud snapped back. "No more argufyin' now. Ef ye opens thet trap o' your'n agin I'll put some lead in yer."

Don did cease speaking with his lips but not with his eyes, for they fairly flashed fire at the old man in a manner quite defiant.

They soon came in sight of a two story frame house, the first of its kind they had seen since their

arrival on Tygart, and on reaching the gate, they were ordered by Devil Jud to turn in. As they did so they got a faint whiff of the supper being prepared inside, and this revived their drooping spirits and heartened them quite a bit. Devil Jud seated himself on the door step and began wiping the perspiration from his brow. He then cautioned the boys not to leave the yard while he washed his face and hands; that if they did, they did so at the peril of their lives. He went into the little kitchen, and the boys stretched themselves out on the grass to rest, for they were quite weary from their day's tramp, and had no desire whatever for any more hiking. They were quite content to remain as guests of Devil Jud for the time being at any rate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE.

Of course Devil Jud's prime reason for kidnapping the scouts was to secure information, and the old fox hit upon a shrewd plan to secure this. When his wife had announced supper he ignored the boys entirely and sat down to the table in plain view where he was certain they could see him. Don nudged Davidson as he said:

"Man alive, don't we get in on this? Gee-willikins this is as bad as a German Prison Camp. Guess they'll be feedin' us weak potato soup."

He had scarcely finished speaking when he heard a noise at the big gate, and he saw a boy enter riding a gray mule. He recognized him at once as the mail boy, who so rudely awakened them that morning. The boys realized that his story would not help them any in their present predicament. The boy seemed surprised at their presence in his own yard, but he said nothing and rode on thru to the barn.

Having finished his supper Devil Jud walked out to where the boys were lying, and addressed them in somewhat gentler tones than he had previously. He began:

"In thet air kitchen's a powful fine supper fer you'ns ef ye kin tell ther truth. What sez ye?"

Don raised himself up in a sitting position, and answered the old man's query:

Sir, we try at all times to speak the truth. Our first scout law is trustworthiness." He need not have wasted his breath in making this statement, for down right honesty was written in his eyes, but it could not be seen by such as Devil Jud Holbrook.

"Wal thet air bein' ther case I'd lack to ax ye er few pinted questions."

"Sir, I'll try my best to answer you promptly and truthfully," Don replied.

"Ain't et er fack thet you'ns wuz bro't down hyar by thet sneakin' cur of a Ratliff fer spyin' pupposes?"

"Indeed we were not," Don answered. "Pray tell me what and who there is to spy down here?"

It could be seen that the old man was getting angry and he blurted out with a kind of snort:

"I knowed ye lie er bout it. Ther truf ez all thet'll save yer skins—so speak ther truf."

"Sir, I have told you the truth. I cannot lie in order that I might get my supper as hungry as I am. Neither can I lie in order that I might secure my freedom."

"Ets er lie, Pap."

It was Bub Holbrook, the mail boy speaking. He had just stepped up in time to hear their conversation.

"Et wuz jest this mornin' thet I seed Old Ratliff down at ther caves. I wuz tol' thet he slept thar last night."

Devil Jud was all aflame now and shaking like a leaf.

"Ez thet so?" he asked of Don.

"Sir—I still stick to the truth. A Mr. Ratcliffe did stay at the home of the guide last night and I was told that he was the sheriff of the county. But I still insist that our trip down here has no connection with him."

"Cose ye'd say thet," the old man replied, "you'ns lied enuf already ter hang ye."

No doubt the old man thought he'd starve them into submission, for there was no further mention of supper, and the boys were given a pallet on the floor in the same room where he, his wife, and Bub slept. There was very little opportunity for the prisoners to escape. All save Don were soon fast asleep and the moon was shedding a golden flood of light into the room. Shortly after midnight Don noticed Devil Jud rise up in bed and make a thorough survey of the room. He then lay down again, and in a few minutes sat up again and took a second glance around the room. This time he stepped out

of bed, and began to dress quietly. He then tiptoed to the door, opened it, and passed out. Don lay awake fully another hour and still there were no signs of the old man's return. Just after arising the next morning the boys spied him coming up the road with gun slung across his shoulder, and mumbling to himself. He spent the greater part of the night at some place other than home, but where? That was a mystery. He approached the house without a word of greeting to any one, and passed into the little kitchen. Bub was saddling his mule preparatory to leaving on his mail route. As he swept past them in a trot he cried out:

"Hey, fellers, air ye hongry?"

This taunt rendered Don like a mad bull, and he started in a run after his persecutor. He was thinking: "If the worst is to come let it come now. I have taken all I'm going to take off of these ruffians." Just as he got within a few feet of Bub, the latter gave the mule a cut with the switch he flourished in his hand, and fired this parting shot at Don: "I'll tend ter ye ter-night when I git back," and he was off again in a canter.

There was at least one person in the Holbrook home who could lay claim to being humane, and that was the wife of Devil Jud. She demonstrated this fact near the noon-hour that morning when she slipped the boys several good-sized sandwiches, and

a hand full of cookies. It was while the old man was repairing a fence just above the house. The boys would then and there have made a grand break for liberty had it not been that the old man had his trusty gun always in reach. They knew he was none too good to shoot and they knew also that he had the reputation of shooting straight. So they took no chances.

Another day passed, and another night had come. Just before turning in for the night Don called his three comrades around him and told them that he had decided to make a dash for liberty that night, and cautioned them not to fall asleep under any circumstances.

"The old man got up near midnight last night," he said, "and went out, and was gone the rest of the night. I am confident that he has a still near by, and that's where he hikes to. I am carrying this stick to bed"—and he opened his shirt where he had it concealed and showed it to the boys, "and when the old man goes out tonight, I'm goin' to crawl to the door and shove the latch up with this stick. Then you fellers be ready to follow me. Crawl out and carry your shoes in your hands. That sleepy-headed Bub will never hear us. Keep a cool head and don't get excited."

It was not long until the old man ordered them inside, and all were soon in their bunks. Each boy

lay there on the floor with wide open eyes, and hearts thumping with excitement. All were waiting for the old man's exit from the room. Those first few hours of the night seemed an eternity, and Don was beginning to despair. He could not bear the thought of remaining another day in this place of torture. He wondered what Mr. Bedford and the scouts thought of their prolonged absence from camp. He knew it was giving the scoutmaster much concern and probably their parents had already been notified of their disappearance. Such thoughts as these were tripping thru his mind when all at once he heard a movement in the bed occupied by Devil Jud, and he saw the old man rise up as he had on the first night and take a long sweeping glance around the room. A few minutes later he was out on the floor and dressing. This the boys witnessed with interest and no little excitement. The hour of freedom for them had come, and they waited with nervous suspense. The old man was soon dressed, and before passing out of the room, came and stood over the boys to be sure they were sound asleep. All of them faked sleep like real actors and Don even emitted one or two vigorous snores much to the satisfaction of the old man, but it came near queering their little game, for the other three boys were on the very verge of laughing outright. Being convinced that they were dead to

the world Devil Jud quietly opened the door and was gone. The other three boys were now impatiently waiting for Don to make the first move, but Don was in no special hurry. He wanted Devil Jud to get a safe distance from the house before he stirred. Five minutes later Don began to crawl slowly towards the door at a snail's pace. Three pairs of eyes were watching his every move with the closest scrutiny. Pushing the latch up with the stick he carried, the door slowly opened, and he passed out with apparent ease. He waited for his companions who were not long in making their exit. With cautious step they left the house, passed thru the gate, and out into the road. All the while not a word had been spoken. Don had assumed leadership and the other three boys now followed closely at his heels. They had perfect confidence in his ability to get them out of their present dilemma, and they let him direct their every move. It was a perfect night. The moon was shining with unusual brilliance. The had only traveled a short distance when they spied a tall, angular figure making the turn in the road, and coming in their direction. It was the form of one who had become all too familiar to them these last few days, and there was the ever-present gun across his right shoulder. The boys dropped down behind a clump of bushes to hide, and as the approaching footsteps drew

nearer there was a choking sensation in their throats, and their hearts were thumping like gasoline engines. The old man was mumbling as usual, and they caught this much. "I allus fergit that derned skiff key. Hain't got no mem'ry no more." After he had passed Don whispered for the first time, "Fellers it's up to us to skin out of here as fast as our legs can take us. When he discovers that we are gone, there'll be something doing. Let's go."

With that they cut thru the field at a sprinter's gait, never once looking back.

"We'll not cross the river here," Don continued. We'll run all the way down to the bridge and cross at Cave Branch, the same route we took when we hiked over here."

They were now approaching the cabin where lived the woman who gave them shelter from the rain on the day of their arrival at the caves.

"I'm going to stop here," Don said, as they drew up at the front gate.

"Why those people are still asleep," replied Davidson, "It's hardly two o'clock yet."

"Well I'll hang around here. There's plenty of places to hide if old Devil Jud goes to the trouble of following us."

The Roth twins protested and insisted on going immediately to camp. The matter was finally com-

promised by allowing them to continue on their way and Don and Davidson remaining where they were.

CHAPTER IX.

DON USES HIS FISTS.

Near daylight Don and Davidson heard voices within the cabin, and they ventured to the door and knocked. The old woman answered and seemed quite taken back to have callers at such an early hour. They soon apprised her of their experiences the past two days and asked if she would get them a little breakfast, offering to pay her generously for her trouble.

"Thet I will," she replied, 'n thar'll be no charge. So thet devil's imp cot yer, did 'e? You'ns lucky not to ha' bin shot, 'n thet's ther Lawd's truf."

The boys were ravenously hungry and ate the simple meal of fat back and corn pone with a real relish. After they had finished Don betrayed the real motive of his visit when he began again to quiz her about Lost Cave.

"Now, sonny, she answered, "I allus hear'n tell thet et was up Dry Branch, a leetle crick dried up now, 'n leadin' up to ther Big Bridge."

"You mean Fern Bridge?"

"Naw—not Fern Bridge. Thet is close by, but er 'nuther bigger bridge et ther very head of Dry Branch. I'se hear'n tell thet et is up thar some place."

Don beamed with excitement as he turned to Da-

vidson, and said: "Davy, that's the very creek bed where old Devil Jud caught us. Had we not been held up by him it's ten to one our signs would have brought us eventually to this bridge.

Don felt that this was certainly a clew worth while, and he would surely follow it up, even if it did mean the possibility of being captured the second time by Devil Jud Holbrook.

Thanking his hostess for her hospitality, the boys bade her good by, and set their faces once more toward camp. It seemed a perfect morning. The sun was just beginning to peep up over the Cliffs of Tygart, and the air vibrant with the songs of birds.

Just as they were approaching the bridge which spans Tygart River they heard some one approaching from behind, and turning, whom should they see but Bub Holbrook astride his gray mule looking daggers at them.

"Do you suppose he is after us?" Davidson asked.

"No," Don replied, "he's starting on his mail route, but if he's bent on trouble he won't have to go a step farther."

They noticed that Bub had stopped his mule, climbed down, and was hitching him to one of the large iron beams of the bridge. Don and Davidson came to a halt, turned and awaited his approach.

He was as pale as a ghost and eyes snapping like

two turtles. Both fists were clenched and a real fiendish expression now covered his face.

"Ye leetle devils," he began, "so ye sneaked off, did ye like dirty cowards. My ole man sed I must kill ye like snakes. I warns yer now, I'se goin' ter lick ye."

Both boys began to prepare for battle, but Don pushed Davidson aside lightly as he said:

"Never mind Davy, this is my scrap. We'll give him a square deal, one at a time." His shirt was soon unbuttoned, and he flung it to the ground.

Had Bub Holbrook only have known that he was now challenging one of the best junior boxers that ever came out of Lawton Municipal Gym, he would have thought twice before provoking a scrap. But Bub did not even know that such institutions as gymnasiums existed. He thought all city boys were weaklings and cowards who had flabby muscles and limeless spines, so he entered the fray with an overabundance of confidence, thinking that brute strength was the only requisite necessary for winning a scrap. Don was actually smiling. (But the fellow who smiles in a bout is usually the fellow who can keep a cool head.)

Thus without more ado they faced each other: Bub Holbrook, descendant of a long line of mountain feudists, and Don Roberts, whose forbears were cavaliers of the aristocratic south. The contrast was interesting.

For a moment they sparred watchfully, then Bub Holbrook feinted Don into an opening, in that same moment his fist shot out and Don fell his full length on the bridge, but he was on his feet again as quickly as he had fallen, and came up grinning.

"Let me at him," Davidson interposed.

"I don't need any help. I tell you this is my scrap," Don answered with impatience.

"Do it again," Don was saying to Bub now. "I dare you to do it just one more time."

"I'll kill ye ef I do," the boy replied.

"Well go on and kill, I dare you, and double-dare you."

Once more came the light tread of quick moving feet, once more Bub Holbrook feinted cunningly—once more his fist shot out, but this time it missed its mark, for ducking the blow, Don landed two real stingers on the country boy's ribs, which sickened him, and sent him staggering back against the side of the bridge. Don danced away again light and buoyant as a cork.

"Stan' up 'n fight lak a man," cried out Bub in desperation.

"Why I am."

"Yer not—hit et me squar' from the shoulder lak a man, an' cut out thet dancin' and prancin'."

"Just as you like," Don replied, "but if I do you are going to fall and fall hard."

"The very idee—thar ain't any two of ye as kin floor me," the boy replied with increasing anger.

"I will then," and Don's forward pass missed its mark. Bub came back strong and brought the blood from Don's left cheek, and he staggered back to the middle of the bridge.

Then came a rush of feet, the panting hiss of breath, the shock of vicious blows, and Bub Holbrook, the bully and braggart, threw up his arms, staggered back against the side railing of the bridge, and went down with a crash.

For a moment Don stood wide-eyed, and panting like a spaniel. Then he began rubbing the blood from his cheek, and turning to Davidson, said: "I did not provoke this fight, it was forced upon me, and I am sorry I had to knock him down, but I do not feel that I have yet broken my Scout Oath and Law."

By this time Bub had regained his wits, and slowly rising to his feet, mumbled out something which savored of a threat, climbed on his mule and was gone in a jiffy.

CHATER X.

THE SEARCH STARTS.

The boys were given a right royal welcome on their return to camp, for the Roth twins, who had preceded them had already broken the news of their capture, and the peculiar strategy used in making their escape. Then it was that they learned from Mr. Bedford he and the scouts together with the guide, had been searching the hills for a day and a half for them, thinking they had wandered off into the wilds of Smoky Valley and were lost. Not once did they entertain the idea that the boys had been so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of Devil Jud Holbrook.

Don and Davidson then told of the little affair with Bub Holbrook on the bridge.

"If he was the aggressor as you say he was," replied Mr. Bedford, "you had a perfect right to defend yourself. The true scout never plays the part of a bully; he never forces a fight. At the same time he never lets anybody run over him. I'd be greatly humiliated indeed if I thought any scout in my troop would be such a sniveling coward that he would let a ruffian and bully like this Holbrook boy impose upon him. Although he got his face badly punched, yet I'll venture to say he has a higher regard for you scouts right now than he would have

had had you have taken to the tall timbers like cowards. I am also glad that one fellow was sufficient to teach him a lesson he greatly needed."

Don, after Mr. Bedford had finished, told the Scoutmaster that he and Davidson wanted to gain his consent to go on a little expedition which would take them away from camp several days. He then told of his conversation with the woman on the hill about Lost Cave. Mr. Bedford laughed outright, and placing his hand upon Don's shoulder, asked:

"Roberts, do you really take this Lost Cave legend seriously?"

"Why sir, the existence of that cave is substantiated by stronger evidence than mere legend."

"How so?"

"Why every native, with but one exception, that I have talked to about it are unanimous in their belief that it exists."

"Why then," queried the Scoutmaster, "is it not as much of a reality, or as much in evidence as these other wonderful caverns we have visited?"

"Well, sir, I give the same theory that you did in relating the legend: that large boulders falling at the entrance closed it up. I have been told since coming here that there was a period of fifteen years that these caves were not visited because the farm here was tenantless. It may have been during this

interim that this particular cave was lost track of."

It could be plainly seen that Don's words were backed up by honest conviction, and an uncompromising faith.

"All right then," the Scoutmaster continued, "you'll have to admit that such an expedition has its dangers as long as Devil Jud Holbrook runs at large; to fall into his hands a second time won't be any picnic. Have you considered this?"

"Yes sir, we have."

"Don't you think you had better recruit more fellows for the trip?"

"Absolutely no—with more than two, there is entirely too much talking. Davy and I have outlined our plans, and you can rest assured we will never fall a second time time into Devil Jud's hands."

"All right, Roberts, I give my consent because I know of your tracking ability as well as that of Davidson. If you are gone very long we will come direct to Devil Jud's after you," and he laughed.

"Good idea," responded Don, "so we'll start this afternoon."

The rest of the morning was spent by Don and Davidson in sleep as they had gotten no rest the night before. Shortly after noon mess they were busy with their preparations, which attracted no little interest from the rest of the campers, who

now gathered around with a curious expression. Naturally the boys were ridiculed by some as foolish adventurers. Others declared that they would be shot by moonshiners.

"Well, you can call us anything you like," replied Don, but we are going to have a lot of fun out of the experience, and if we are so unfortunate as to get plugged by moonshiners it's our own skins, so you fellows need lose no sleep. We'll do all the worrying."

They had packed their haversacks with a goodly supply of provisions. Strapped to them were a double roll of blankets, cooking kits, axes, some first aid material, and an acetyline camp lamp apiece.

All the afternoon it had been hot and sultry. The clouds hung low and were threatening rain. Just as the two boys were strapping their haversacks on preparatory to leaving, the low tapping sound of rain drops could be heard among the leaves overhead. But this did not halt them, for the route they had mapped out led them over the hill directly facing camp to Smoky Valley, which is honeycombed with small caverns. Bidding their Scoutmaster and scout companions adieu, they struck out across the creek, then up the hillside, and were soon lost in the thick-set wods. After striking the well beaten path which led thru the forest they were hardly aware of the fact that it was raining, for the giant

oaks spread over them like a great canopy protecting them from the summer's shower. The air was filled with a faint, cool, sodden odor as of stirred forest depths, and the boys breathed it deep into their lungs as they tramped along. Although the afternoon was only half gone it was growing dark in the forest due to the storm clouds overhead. The wind was increasing. The last gust had been preceded by an ominous roaring down the hillside, and the rain now began to filter through the leafy dome above.

"There's Smoky Valley now," Don exclaimed with a flourish of the hand, as they came to a little clearing in the forest, "but I did not know there was a house in the entire valley, but I see there is," and he pointed to adim but perfectly defined cabin in the distance.

"Let's avoid it if possible for I see it has occupants, smoke is coming from the chimney — these people somehow or other have a sort of grape-vine telegraphy out here in these hills, and when a stranger is passing thru they send the word on ahead. I don't know how it's done, but one thing is certain we don't want one, Jud Holbrook, to know we are on the path again, or there might be another little hair-raising experience for us."

As night crept up from the valley that stormy afternoon the little cabin was at first quite blotted

out by wind and rain, but presently re-appeared as could be seen by the faint flicker of a light from its window.

"Here's a pipperino of a cave right here," exclaimed Davidson. Let's turn in."

"Too close to that house," cautioned Don—"Those people would see our campfire in a jiffy. We don't want any abrupt ending to this trip if we can help it."

He had scarcely spoken when the air was rent with a scream that brought both boys rigidly to attention.

"Oh Lawd, ets kilt me—ets kilt me."

The same voice cried out again:

"Oh Lawd have mussy, have mussy."

"That's some one in distress," remarked Don.

"What shall we do?" asked Davidson.

Do what all true scouts should do, Davy. Go over and see if we can be of any assistance. So it seems we'll have to get acquainted whether or no."

With that they turned out of the woods, cut straight thru the field which skirted the woods to where the house stood. Here they found a boy near their own age rolling on the little porch in front apparently in great agony. Occasionally he would draw his right knee up against his breast and hug it tightly, emitting at the same time one of those blood curdling screams. Close by was a woman whom

Don and Davidson took to be his mother. She was wringing her hands in a sort of helpless desperation, while a girl who appeared to be older than the unfortunate boy was crying, "Pap, aye Pap," at the top of her voice. Her cries intermingled with the piteous groans of the boy were not long in reaching the ears of a man who was now descending the hill at the rear of the cabin in double-quick time.

It was at this juncture that two strangers, Don and Davidson, were observed.

"Pray what's the trouble," inquired Don with deep concern.

"Oh Lawdy, Lawdy, he's been hit by Peter," the mother replied.

Immediately Don thought of a bull dog, and his eyes sought for it. Both boys fortified themselves with good-sized rocks. The old man rushed up, and learning the trouble, cried out:

"Get the sperits—yer wastin' time. Quick with ther sperits, old woman."

"Ah I see," Don ventured, "a snake bite. Sir, I can give all the help possible until you can get a doctor here."

"Naw—Naw," the old man replied — "Licker, sperits ez all thet kin save him."

"Can't you see his leg swelling?" asked Don with some impatience. "All the liquor in the county

couldn't counteract that poison when once it gets in this boy's system. Let me at him."

He threw his haversack off and fell at the boy's side.

The old man brushed him rudely aside, for the old woman was now running to him with a jug in one hand and a tin cup in the other. The anxious and deeply grieved woman was so nervous that just as she approached the old man's side, she stumbled, fell, and the jug hit a large rock and crashed into nothingness.

"Oh by——," and the old man raised up on his knees, and finally finished his sentence: "O Lawd fergive, I cum nigh sinnin'—Oh Lawd I did."

By this time Don and Davy were ripping the boy's trouser leg open. Quicker than the time it takes to relate, they had applied a strongly bound tourniquet, thus shutting off the possibility of the poison permeating his system.

"Have you a razor?"

"Yas—", the old man answered with a drawl. But ye ain't cuttin' 'im open, air ye?"

"No," replied Don, "it's to make this wound bleed a little freer. I don't like to use my knife as I have been using it for cooking purposes."

The old man obeyed promptly and soon Don had the blood spurting out more freely, and then he pulled his little first aid kit from his haversack, and

in a little while had a healing antiseptic applied to the wound. The boy seemed apparently free from pain.

"Now, sir, I have done all a Boy Scout can do. This I hope will be sufficient until you can get a doctor here."

"Wal thet'll be atter midnight, fer it's nigh on ter ten miles whar Dock Turner lives, but I'll saddle ther ole mare, 'n git him hyar ez soon as possible. But afore I goes who am I ter thank fer this hyar favor which is suttinly providential. Ther good Lawd sont you'ns hyar ez Good Samaritans, 'n jest ter think I'se erbout ter tarn yer away."

"Oh, we are just two scouts camping near here," Don replied courteously. "Our motto is, 'Be Prepared.' Our training is such that makes us ready to meet any ordinary emergency. I am very glad we could be of help to this boy."

"Wal, boys—I'm whut's known 'n these hyar parts ez a circuit rider—mebbe ye don' git me—a preacher man, 'n I lives daily 'n ther fear uv ther Lawd. Don't think coz I wanted ter giv' ther lad sperits that I wuz enterin' inter temptation—Naw sur — Naw sur — Ev'ry pious Kaintuckian keeps jest a leetle sperits on hand fer purely scriptural reasons, boys. Saint Paul said, ye know to take a leetle fer yer stummick's sake, 'n then we'uns mus' hev it fer

snake bites. Ye know snakes air plentiful in these hyar hills."

The old man raised his hands in a kind of benediction, turned, reached for a bridle which hung on the porch, and started up the hill to get his bony steed which was grazing near by.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DAILY GOOD TURN.

The boy was carried into the house by Don and Davidson, and placed upon a bed which occupied one corner of the dingy cabin. The only light was a smoking oil lamp which was minus a chimney, and the scent from it was filling the room with its sickening odor. They had scarcely placed their charge on the bed until he was fast asleep, and seemingly free from all pain. The scouts then turned to go, but the old woman halted them:

"Naw—I won't hear'n tell of you'ns leavin' now. We'uns hain't got much home hyar, but sech ez et is, yer welcome to et. Ets gittin' dark an' bein' strangers in these hyar parts, ye'll be bound ter git lost, 'sides ye have saved this hyar boy's life, mebbe, an' we'uns 'd be moughty ongrateful lak to tarn yer away atter all thet."

Don explained that they were prepared to pitch camp any place, and had thought of occupying the little cave near the edge of the woods.

"Naw—," she continued, "thet place air full'er snakes. Jest make up yer minds to stay hyar. I'll git you'ns a leetle bite. We'uns has had our supper."

"All right, ma'am," Don replied, "we'll accept your

hospitality and spend the night here, but only on the condition that you let us get our own supper. I see you have a good blaze in the fire-place there, and we have plenty of provisions, so with your permission we will get our own supper."

The proposition of two boys cooking their own suppers seemed a ludicrous one to the old woman, and she gave a hearty chuckle in response to it. But the boys finally won out, and kneeling down before the huge fire-place, they were soon busy in their preparations for the meal.

The old woman now came to the side of the bed where the boy was sleeping, and stroking his hair, turned to Don and Davy as she remarked quite pathetically:

"He ain't our'n."

"You mean he isn't your own son," Don replied.

"Naw—he ain't our'n et all. Dunno much erbout 'im. Jest happened in hyar one night lack you'ns has, 'n axed ef we'uns could'n tek him in. Pore boy's feet wuz sore, 'n he so tired lak and hongry. Et wuz last spring 'n ther ole man wuz plantin' corn. He wuz a sight of help fer a youngster, 'n we all tuck er lackin' ter him. Bin hyar all summer, 'n wuz calculatin' on leavin' tomorrer. We'uns begged him to stay hyar, but naw he's a roaving' disposition, 'n he had his bundle all did up," and she pointed to a

small roll of clothing on the floor on the opposite side of the room.

"Hasn't he any relatives?" Don asked.

"Yas—et wuz er mean step-father thet keeps him er way from hum, so he sez, but he's nevah breathed his name. Jest calls himself 'Ches.' Purty rough lak, but he's gotter good heart. Everything tecks ter him. Thet rattler thet bit him followed him 'round jest lak er dog er cat er any other pet would. Nevah seed er snake do it afore, 'n he even named the varmint, Peter. My ole man wanted ter kill et, fer he 'lowed et would bite 'im, but he begged so ter spar' et . Wish now he had kilt et," she said regretfully.

The boys listened attentively to the old woman's story, and this little glimpse into the life of the rough mountain lad was of more than passing interest to them. They had their bacon fried and were now toasting some bread over the red hot coals, when Ches raised up out of the bed on one elbow, took a survey of the room, gave a vigorous sniff, and then yelled at the top of his voice:

"I'm hongry."

He then lay down again to wait developments, but as there seemed to be no unusual activity on the part of the occupants of the room to appease his ravenous appetite, he raised up again, and cried out even louder than before:

"I'm hongry."

This time his declaration was embellished with oaths. It seemed to get quick results also, for the old woman hurried to his side, and laying her hand tenderly on his head said:

"Now, Ches, you's had yore supper—you's not hongry."

"Yes I am," he cried out—"I want some 'er thet bacon 'n grease." He emphasized this request with another volley of oaths.

Don now arose from the fire-place, walked over to the bed, and taking the boy by the wrist, not roughly, but firmly, said:

"Look here, young man, you've been mighty close to the jumping off place to be using such language as that. It would sound a whole lot better to hear you offering up a little prayer of thanksgiving."

A scowl covered Ches' face like a cloud on the horizon. He squared his jaw, jerked his arm away from Don, and then asked with a sort of hiss:

"Who is you?"

"Me? Just an ordinary fellow like you, minus the cussing."

"Too good ter cuss, air ye?"

"No—not too good," Don replied good-naturedly, "just too decent."

The old woman did not give Ches an opportunity to prolong the unpleasant argument, for she began

to shame him for his ingratitude after all the scouts had done for him that afternoon. It had the desired effect, for a look of shame now crept over the boy's face, and he said in somewhat calmer tone:

"Wal—he tried ter stop me from cussin — no'un ever tried et afore."

"Well—we'll forget it," Don chimed in, "and I'll see that you get your fill of bacon."

With that he handed him two good-sized sandwiches, which he was soon devouring, and Don was perfectly willing to forgive him for his profanity, as he witnessed the smile of contentment now illuminating his countenance.

Before an hour had elapsed Ches had warmed up to his two companions considerably, and was telling them of his experience with Peter, the pet rattler. They were curious to know how he had escaped the fangs of the venomous thing as long as he had.

"I wuz er trainin' 'im aller summer most. Et's easy, ef yer knows how. We fust mek him strike his pizen out on er stick. Atter he strikes four times he hain't go any pizen left. Then ye kin do anything wif 'im ye wants ter, 'n he knows et."

Don had made quite a study of poisonous snakes himself, and he knew what the boy said was true. He knew this truth from a scientific standpoint: that connected with each rattlesnake's fangs were little glands in which poison was formed. Pressure

on the glands at the time the snake strikes squirts the poison into the wound. These fangs are soon replaced with new ones, so that a poisonous snake for a short time is rendered harmless, but only for a sort time.

"Well, he got you after all, didn't he?" Don asked with a smile.

"Yas—al cause I got keerless. I played with ther blamed thing all summer, 'n he 'peared afeard uv me 'till ter-day. Lawd, I hopes et don't kill me. My laig seems ter be gitin' numb lak."

"I am glad you mentioned it. I'll loosen the tourniquet just the least bit."

This he did but only for an instant. It seemed to him the doctor would never come, but his anxiety was relieved just a few minutes before the midnight hour, when in walked the old man and the physician, both dripping with rain. A hasty examination was made of the wound by the doctor. All the while the old man was bemoaning the fact that the "sperits had been wasted." The doctor turned, and facing him said:

"These young Boy Scouts have demonstrated very forcibly the benefits derived from their training. They have done admirably and I am glad to say saved the lad's life. Let me say further that it is a mistaken idea that filling up on whiskey will cure snake bite. It adds poison to the system rather

than counteracts it. There is only one more thing that I can do that the boys haven't done, but that is a treatment known only by a study of medical science, and is not apart of first aid. But the credit of saving the boy's life goes to these two young scouts, for their simple tourniquet kept the poison from permeating his system."

It would be hard to describe Ches' expression as these words fell from the lips of the physician. His eyes were moist, and if there had been ingratitude in his heart, his eyes failed to reveal it. He wiped the big tears from his eyes on his faded shirt sleeve, then slowly lifted his right hand and grasped Don's hand in a firm grip. He then stretched out his left hand towards Davidson, who took it in both his, and each scout as they thus stood experienced a thrill such as comes only to a Boy Scout who has done his daily good turn, and who wishes no further compensation than the joy which comes as the result of helping others.

CHAPTER XII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

The next day found the two adventurers a good five miles from the scene of their exciting experiences of the day before. They were now enthusiastically searching for Lost Cave. It had become a passion with them, and not a cliff, nor an opening in the hillside was missed. They had now reached the little trail which led up over the hill to the Big Bridge, the classic name being, "Bridge of Sighs." They were soon lost in a dense forest, and the great mass of underbrush rendered the trail hard to follow. The woods also abounded with large rocks which were literally covered with the most beautiful variety of ferns. Suddenly they came upon a sight which thrilled and stirred every fibre of their being, and they stood speechless in a kind of reverential awe before the spectacle. They were taking their first look at the Big Bridge, another natural span much greater in height and rustic beauty than even Fern Bridge. They knew now that they were not lost, and that from henceforth their route would lead down Dry Branch. But before resuming their tramp they climbed to the top of the great bridge, where they ate a hastily prepared meal.

"Caution is our watchword from now on," re-

marked Don as they struck the Dry Branch trail. "We are now dangerously near the haunts of our friend, Devil Jud, I fear. So as we keep our eye skinned for Lost Cave, let's also keep it skinned for him. A second capture isn't to my liking, besides I don't want to have my search interfered with."

What had once been a mountain brooklet was now a dried up creek bed, and the hiking was anything but a pleasant experience. Certainly a very tiresome one, and the boys had to rest every few minutes. As they journeyed on they discovered the creek bed getting more narrow, and the hills closing in upon them from both sides. As Don glanced to his right he noticed on the hillside just above, an opening of considerable size. A large tree had been uprooted, and had fallen midway across the opening with its gaunt, dead limbs obscuring much of the entrance. His heart leaped at the sight. He had explored other openings during the day, but none gave him the thrill that this one did. He cried out with the enthusiasm of a discoverer: "There is Lost Cave", and he threw his arms around his lone companion in great glee. The boys climbed the hillside with great expectancy, and when halfway up sat down on the dead trunk of a tree to rest. But here their attention was arrested to something more alarming. Their quick ears, at-

tuned like animals to all woodland sounds, detected the crackling of underwood in the distance. Their equally sharp eyes saw the figure of a man coming down a trail from the opposite side of the dry creek bed. They recognized the features of the man, and as they did so, drew back with fast palpitating hearts, a hushed breath, and hurriedly hid themselves behind the trunk of the tree upon which they ad been sitting. For they had seen that figure before—It was Devil Jud Holbrook.

Finding they had been unobserved the boys took courage and their faculties became actively alive. They now watched every movement of the old desperado with interest. Don was surprised as well as gratified to find that all his nervousness had passed away, and he whispered to his companion:

"A narrow escape, old pal, but it's worth a farm in Texas to put one over on that old scamp. I wonder if he can boast that he's had us under 'kiver' today, all day? No—hardly."

Devil Jud on reaching the creek bed turned down and went in the direction of its mouth, which the boys knew led to Tygart. They were relieved at his quick disappearance, and they decided to go on up to the entrance of the newly-found cave, and after a brief rest, explore it, and then camp there for the night, for they dare not venture any further down the creek.

On reaching the entrance of the cave, the boys relieved themselves of haversacks and blankets, and then peered into the black depths of what they hoped was Lost Cave.

"Where is your ball of twine?" asked Davidson.

"Right here, pal, O' mine," and Don reached into his pocket and produced it, then tied the end of it to a rock on the outside of the cave. Carrying the ball in his hand, he slowly unwound it as he started back.

"Don't forget the acetylene lamps," he cautioned Davidson, "the flash will do for awhile. This little string may prove a real life-line to us should we get lost."

They were now creeping forward at a snail's pace.

"Well, Davy, old boy this is sure Lost Cave or my judgment isn't worth a jitney. What say you?"

"B'leve so too," replied his companion, "but I'm not making any predictions until we have gone several miles back."

They did not go several miles back. In fact they had only gone a few yards back when Davy's flashlight revealed an impassable barrier, a wall of limestone rock which was nothing more than the end of the cave.

"Fool's luck as usual," grunted Don. It was more than a look of chagrin and disappointment that cov-

ered his face—poor boy—it was black despair. His castle which had towered so majestically in the air a few minutes before, had now tumbled and lay at his feet an ungainly mass of debris.

Slowly retracing his steps, with Davy following close at his heels, Don began to re-wind his ball of twine, and as he walked he found his faith, his confidence returning, and on reaching the entrance of the cave the glorious sunlight almost blinded him. With face aglow he cried out triumphantly: "I'll not give up."

CHAPTER XIII.

CHES SPRINGS A SCARE.

The boys did not dare light a fire that night. In fact they considered it even risky to use their flashlights very much for fear of being detected by the foxy eye of Devil Jud.

"One thing certain," remarked Davy as they sat there in the darkness of the lone cave, "we've got to get some place tomorrow where a fellow can do a little cooking. I've just about run thru with my cooked grub."

"Same here," replied Don, "but somehow, something tells me we are going to find that cave tomorrow."

"We found it today, didn't we?" and Davy gave a hearty chuckle.

"Now you needn't make fun of this discovery," spoke up Don in his philosophical way. "Have you stopped once to consider what this cave has meant to us? It's been a real life saver, for if my attention had not have been attracted to it, we would have gone on our way down the creek bed, and have been overtaken by Devil Jud—well you can guess the rest. Old pal, this here little cave means a whole lot to me, and tonight I shall give a name. It shall be Refuge Cave."

Being good and tired from their day's jaunt, the boys were soon rolled up in their blankets and fast asleep. It was shortly after the midnight hour that they were awakened from sleep by voices down below. They could not distinguish the nature of the conversation, but they were agreed that one voice was quite familiar. It was the voice of Devil Jud.

"He's on his nightly trip," whispered Don.

They both watched closely from behind the fallen tree at the mouth of the cave. It was easy to see every movement of the old desperado as the moon was shining brightly. Someone had come down the trail from the opposite side to meet him. Both then went back up the hill over the same path which he had traversed that afternoon when spied by the boys.

"Our situation is getting exceedingly ticklish," said Don to Davy the next morning on arising. "I move that we go back and establish headquarters under Big Bridge, and operate from there."

This they did, and for the next two days they ventured down as far as Refuge Cave but they were careful to keep out of the creek bed.

It was on their second night at Big Bridge that they had at last reached the conclusion that their quest was a fruitless one, and that they would return to camp the following morning.

"It'll be awfully humiliating to go back and have

the fellows guying us, but we'll face the music," Don remarked gloomily.

Davidson had already turned in for the night, and inquired of Don if he was ready for bed.

"Not yet," he replied. "You see it's our last night on this trip of exploration, and I reckon I'll see the rest of it out."

"You don't mean that you intend sitting up all night?"

"Yes, I guess so, but that needn't disturb you, Davy," and he threw another piece of wood on the fire. This they had built on the opposite side of the bridge, careful that its rays would not be visible down Dry Branch.

Thus Don sat for many hours before the blazing fire. Yes long after Davy had fallen asleep he sat there in a deeply meditative mood. He was thinking mostly of the failure of his little expedition, and what it meant to him to have to return to camp on the morrow and face the ridicule of his fellow-campers. His eyes were heavy with sleep, and he was soon searching for his blankets. Rolling up in them, he was soon fast asleep, and with sleep came peace of mind.

It was well past midnight when he suddenly awoke. He started. He was sure he was awakened by the presence of a third party who had entered their little retreat under the bridge. He was confident that as

he opened his eyes he could see by the flickering fire-light a form approaching from the other end of the chasm. There was a chill in the air, and a nervous shiver passed over him. There was no mistake; it was no superstitious fancy, for he could now hear footsteps as distinctly as he was hearing his own heart beat. "Is it possible," he was thinking in that short space of time, "that on this last night, after escaping in such a miraculous way as we did from this old monster that it is our fate to at last fall into his clutches."

Nearer and nearer came the tramp, tramp of feet, which sounded strangely familiar, Don thought. He could hear the long, deep respirations of his sleeping companion, and he was reaching over to awaken him when he stopped suddenly and became motionless. He was conscious of a form now standing over him, but the fire had now died down, and there was no possibility of recognizing who it was. A wild notion seized Don; a sort of last resort, and jumping to his feet with the fleetness of a deer, he grabbed the form with the ferocity of a tiger, and threw him to the ground, and throwing the whole weight of his body upon his victim, was now feeling for his neck. Instantly he knew it was not a man, but a boy near his own size. He immediately released his fingers from the boy's neck, who now began to yell:

"Oh Lawdy, don't kill me—don't kill me."

The commotion awakened Davidson, and Don called for a flash-light, but this was now unnecessary, for he recognized the voice—it was the voice of Ches.

"Whut ye mean?" the astonished and frightened boy asked as he arose to his feet. "Ye saved mer life onct, now yer tryin' ter kill me."

"Beg your pardon with all my heart, kid," Don replied with no little emotion. He threw his arms around the lad's neck, and hugged him for joy.

"Why didn't you sound some kind of alarm when you came in here?" Don asked.

"I did'nt want ter 'sturb ye until mornin'—I seed ther light, 'n I 'lowed et wuz your'n."

Don then explained why he gave him such a rough reception. He related to him all their experiences with Devil Jud Holbrook.

"Wal you'd er shore kilt 'im, ef it had 'er bin 'im," the boy replied in his characteristic way.

"By the way, how's your leg?" Don inquired.

"Aw et's healin' up some, but purty sore yit, an' blue lak.'

"Ches, you had no business taking such a trip as this one on that leg. What made you do it?"

The boy bowed his head somewhat abashed. He hardly knew what sort of answer to give. Finally he said:

"Jest wanted ter be wif ye scout boys."

"Well, we appreciate that too, but man alive, look what a risk you have run."

The boy hit Don on the shoulder as he said quite confidently:

"Thet pizen'll never hurt me. Naw—I ain't afeard."

It was not long until their eyes were greeted with the dawn. Don and Ches were soon busy searching for fire-wood while Davy was making preparations for the morning meal.

"What time will we start?" Davy asked of Don after they had eaten their breakfast.

"We don't go today, Davy—Have you seen that kid's leg?"

Davy glanced over to where Ches was sitting, and noticed that his leg was again swelling, and had a nasty color.

"We'll stay here," Don continued, "and see that this young man rests that leg," and he looked at Ches with a commanding air.

He stretched his blanket out over a bed of leaves, and beckoned to the boy to lie down. Ches' prompt obedience was really humorous, considering the little episode enacted by him on that first night at the cabin when he demanded food in such a discourteous manner. He was fairly eating out of Don's hand now, and it all seemd rather amusing.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MIDNIGHT DISCOVERY.

All day long Don looked after Ches as though he might have been his own brother. Not once did he allow him to move around on his sore leg, and twice during the day he had bathed it in cool water and dressed it. It was rather hard for one of Ches' temperament to subject himself to discipline, but he seemed willing now to obey any command given by Don.

"Do you know what I am going to do tonight?" Don asked rather impulsively as they were eating supper that night.

"Why discover Lost Cave, I guess," Davy replied with a grin.

"Now, Davy boy, let up on that. It's getting to be a rather embarrassing subject with me right now, and I fear it will be more so when I get back to camp. No—not that, but you know I've a half notion to go back down to Refuge Cave tonight and watch the antics of old Devil Jud. You know that old codger don't go back there in the hills every night for his health."

"My advice to you," Davy replied, "is to let Devil Jud alone."

"No, Davy, I'm going in the next hour," and he

glanced at his wrist watch. "Just as soon as it grows a little dark I'll set out. You stay here and take care of Ches."

Both boys begged him to abandon the trip, but to no avail, and as the shadows began to lengthen he started down Dry Branch. After he had gone about one half mile he left the creek bed and followed the ridge of the hill to Refuge Cave. He was taking no chances on this trip of meeting his nemesis, Devil Jud.

Arriving at the cave he began his long vigil. True to schedule familiar footsteps were heard trudging up the creek bed shortly after midnight. Arriving at the spot opposite Refuge Cave, Devil Jud—for that's who it was — turned as usual, and took the trail leading up the hill. Don's resolve was a desperate one, but he felt it safer to carry it out at night rather than in daylight. A resolve to follow the old desperado and locate his nightly haunt. Creeping down the hillside at a snail's pace, and careful that no underbrush crackled under his feet, Don reached the creek bed, and then by the moonlight could see the well-beaten path leading up over the hill on the other side. He found himself growing nervous as his feet trod the well worn path of his enemy, and a feeling of fear was gripping him and overpowering him. He tried to shake it off as he walked, but the farther he went

the more he realized that he was treading on dangerous ground, and he halted for a moment and debated whether he should go on or turn back. He possibly would have yielded to the latter impulse had not his eyes at that moment spied a light which seemed to be shining from a cave which was less than fifty yards away. He had been unable to see the light sooner owing to a great mass of debris which was piled up in front of the entrance. It was only when he rounded the turn of the path that it became visible. On closer inspection it looked like breast works thrown up, and had every appearance of a kind of fort. Don left the path and quietly circled around to the right of the cavern entrance, and then climbed the steep ascent which brought him to a point looking directly down on the entrance to the cave. Fortune favored him, for there was a cleft in one of the large rocks over the entrance and in this he took refuge, and awaited the dawn.

He was awakened by a voice quite familiar to his ear, and the conversation which wafted its way upward to where he was sitting, ran as follows:

"Strange footprints I tells ye. I seed 'em ez I started hum 'n I cum back ter warn ye."

"Aw gwan off, yer dreamin'. I'll bet by heck theys yer own."

"Wal cum hyar 'n tek a peep fer yerself."

Don now arose and peeped out from behind a

large boulder and could see the two men plainly as they went down the path to inspect the tracks. He recognized Devil Jud. The other man he had never seen before.

"See," spoke up Devil Jud, "Ets er boy's track."

"Yer right, Jud, ez usual. By cracky et mought be one of Sheriff Ratliff's spies."

Devil Jud was fairly snorting now, and he gave vent to his anger with threats and oaths.

Don sat breathless, wondering, expectant, but not daring to move. The men might start a search of the hills any moment and discover him. He realized that he would sure be taken for a spy now. He had seen enough to know that their enterprise as well as their cave was a secret, and that these desperadoes would subject any witness, however innocent or unwilling, to horrible penalties.

The time crept slowly by—he heard every rap of a woodpecker in a distant tree; a blue jay dipped and lighted on a branch within his reach, but he dared not extend his hand.

Both men walked back to the entrance of the cave and Devil Jud was finally heard to say:

"Wal—I mought be wrong, but let's keep our guns handy. Mought ez well git our breakfus' 'n we'ns kin cum back atter dinner."

Both then started down the path, stopping every

few minutes and taking a careful survey of the hills on both sides as though looking for someone.

Don waited patiently, listening until the last foot fall of the men had died away in the distance, and then emerged stiff and cramped from his concealment. But he no longer thought of flight; curiosity burned in his veins. He longed to see what the attraction in the cave was. The only thing that prevented his immediate exploration of it was the fear that others might be there. No, he was sure there were no others—he would take a chance. Then he thought of the possible return of Devil Jud and his confederate, but he remembered they had agreed to return after the noon-hour.

He quickly climbed down the steep ledge, and crept cautiously around to the entrance of the cave. Here he paused, looked, and listened. The solitude was profound. The change from the dazzling sunlight to the darkness confused him at first, and he could see nothing. On entering he stumbled over something—this something proved to be three good-sized jugs.

"Ah," he said in a whisper, "this must be a moonshine still."

As he went back further there were more convincing evidences. Here was a real honest-to-goodness still, such as he had seen pictures of.

Yes Devil Jud was a moonshiner, and he — Don

Roberts, had done what dozens of Revenue Officers had failed to do: locate the still operated by Devil Jud Holbrook.

He now lit his acetylene lamp, and started back. He was struck with the beauty of this cavern. Its formations were unlike those of any of the caves he had visited, and superior in beauty. It seemed to have color effects that even the great Bat Cave did not even possess. This main corridor which he was now walking thru was a winding one running thru limestone and glacial drift. Overhead were thousands of glistening stalactites which resembled the dome of some great cathedral with its shining incandescents. Throwing his light to one side it fell upon a sight of rare beauty. At first glance it looked like it might have been a jewel box of priceless value, containing rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, due to the blending of the limestone and other mineral formations. Don was so thrilled by what he was witnessing that he had forgotten all about the danger which he was subjecting himself to, and he was going back farther and further into this labyrinth of wonder and beauty.

He now began to observe other corridors leading out from the main one, both to the right and left. He had not traveled far until he came to a corridor which led off abruptly to his left. Glancing down it he noticed it led off into a large chamber of unu-

sual size. The immensity of it aroused his curiosity, and venturing off the main passage-way, he walked down the corridor, and glancing into this vast chamber witnessed hundreds of stalagmites closely resembling tombstones. It had every appearance of a well-filled grave yard. It was spooky to say the least, and he turned away quickly to witness something more cheerful.

Don knew that this was only the beginning of this great cavern. He knew also that it surpassed any of the other four caves he had visited. There was no longer any doubt in his mind that this newly discovered cave was none other than Lost Cave. He looked at his watch. It was just ten o'clock. He had been exploring the cave exactly three hours. With cautious tread he retraced his steps back to the entrance, and finding the coast clear made a quick dash for Big Bridge where he would announce his discovery.

CHAPTER XV.

LOST CAVE.

It was three more days before Ches' leg had healed sufficiently to permit his walking on it, and the suspense was galling to Don, who longed to return and make a more extensive exploration of the wonderful cavern which he had discovered. His announcement on arrival at Big Bridge was received somewhat skeptically by his companion and fellow-scout Davidson, who now was anxious to see whether all Don had been telling was the "real thing" or wild imagination.

Ches could not be persuaded by any argument whatsoever to return to the house of the friends who had sheltered him all summer, but insisted on exploring the cave with the other two boys. Instead of going to Refuge Cave as Don had done on his previous trip they followed the ridge of the hill, going direct to the bluff overlooking the entrance of Lost Cave, for Don had quite decided in his mind that this was Lost Cave, if not, a new one which rivaled any he had yet seen in the Carter group. They arrived at eight o'clock in the evening, and after resting here all night, started on their return trip of exploration after the departure of Devil Jud and his confederate. It was decided that Don

should stand sentinel, and it was his foxy eye that watched every movement of the moonshiners, while the other two boys kept closely under cover. In less than a half hour they had ventured in the cavern, and after going back for a distance of a quarter of a mile, started unrolling their ball of twine, and were soon witnessing the wonders of Lost Cave. Davidson, who rarely spoke, was now in a talkative mood, and slapping Don on the back, said: "Well, old chap, you have delivered at last. I'll confess I didn't have much faith in your story, but put her there"—and he extended his hand to Don in hearty congratulation. They had now completely unwound their ball of twine, and it seemed as though they had hardly started. They stopped and debated as to whether they should turn back or go on. Don finally exclaimed: "I say, go on. We have our grub and blankets with us. We can mark our way as we go along. I am not afraid of being lost. We are pretty well posted as to the hours Devil Jud frequents this place, so forward!"

Coming to a sort of basin which nature had carved from the rocks, they found it being constantly filled with pure, sparkling water. Don suggested that they make a wish as they drank, which they did, and he henceforth called it the "Wishing Well." In another place was a formation which resembled huge drifts of snow; further on an elephant, and a per-

fect imitation of a coffin. This latter the boys named, "Job's Coffin." They did not venture off once from the main corridor, and many large chambers were observed on either side which the boys were confident contained many wonderful formations, but they were taking no chances, and passed them by undiscovered.

Shortly after breakfast on the same day the three discoverers were pushing their way thru Lost Cave, Scoutmaster Bedford assembled his scouts for the purpose of organizing a searching party to find them.

"I am deeply concerned about their long absence," commented the Scoutmaster. "They have been gone nearly a week now. We should start home day after tomorrow, and we need Roberts in our baseball game tomorrow against the Oakland Stars. I fear they have met with foul play. This afternoon we will divide ourselves up in three squads and search the hills thoroughly. If necessary I shall take Sheriff Ratcliffe, who is in this neighborhood now, to the home of this outlaw, Holbrook, and make a search there for them. Remember, we start right after dinner." All shared with the Scoutmaster this feeling of uneasiness with the exception of Patrol Leader, Stockton, who still contended that Roberts and Davidson were equal to any emergency.

"You said that before," spoke up Timmy Sullivan, "and they got captured."

"Yes, and Don Roberts' resourcefulness made possible their escape," retorted Stockton.

"Well, he's got to go some when he matches his wits with an old Devil like Jud Holbrook."

"I'll admit that," continued Stockton, "and what's more he'll beat Devil Jud at his own game. See if I am not right."

The explorers had now reached a rocky stairway which seemed to lead up to a second story of the cavern. After a sort consultation, they decided that they would tackle it, and see what was above. Reaching the top they scrambled thru a narrow hole, and ló! a beam of sunlight shot across their path. It did not come from the side of the cavern, but seemed to be shining down thru the roof.

"Boys, this is luck," Don shouted enthusiastically, "that is, if we can make our exit thru that hole."

It was fully ten feet above them; too high to reach with their hands.

"Davidson, you and Ches can go first. Ches and I will lift you up first. I can boost Ches up in a jiffy, and you can pull him thru. Then you two can pull me up with your rope."

After many failures, Davidson finally by great effort, pulled himself thru the opening, and reached

the outside, where he found the air suffocating. It was an easier feat for Ches, who had the strong arm of Davidson at the opening to lift him thru. The rope was lowered, and Don fastened it around his body under the arms, tying it securely with the bowline knot. At a signal he was lifted to the opening by his companions, where he scrambled thru, and gave a cheer of triumph.

The boys were not surprised that this entrance to the cave went so many years unobserved. It was nothing more or less than a sink basin or "kettle hole," which had sunk deeper and deeper, and was entirely obliterated from view by falling timber and underbrush. There was a depression in the ground for many feet around the opening, and might well have been called the entrance to the "bottomless pit" from its apearance.

They came out in a woods and found it hard to get their bearings. They knew they were at least five miles from the Dry Creek entrance, but where? was the question. They walked out to what seemed to be a clearing in the woods, and before Davidson had time to consult his compass, Don spoke up:

"That fallen tree there looks familiar. You recall my saying that it was struck by lightning, judging from the way it was splintered."

"Sure," replied Davidson, "it was the afternoon

we passed thru here for Smoky Valley. Why we can't be over one hundred yards from camp."

"I know it," spoke up Don, "it's right at the foot of the hill."

The three boys let out a yell that made the welkin ring. It did more. It brought to an end a conference which was then being held by Scoutmaster and scouts for the purpose of organizing a searching party to find the lost explorers.

"What did I tell you?" cried out Patrol Leader Stockton, quite triumphantly. "That's the reason I stuck it out to the last today that it was useless for us to undertake any search. But there seems to be three of them. Who is that short, stumpy guy?"

Mr. Bedford laughed, as he said:

"You will recall that when Columbus discovered America he carried Indians back to Spain to prove his discovery. No doubt this is a native of Lost Cave, which Don and Davy have brought with them as the proof of their discovery."

The whole bunch indulged in a good, hearty round of laughter.

The three boys were running as they approached camp, and Don was crying at the top of his voice:

"We found it—We found it."

"Found what, Roberts?" asked Bedford with a smile as the boy came up and saluted.

"Why, Lost Cave, sir."

"Like fun you did," chimed in Timmy Sullivan with curt sarcasm.

"All right, seeing is believing," ejaculated Don. "I don't ask you to take my word. I can prove it by these two fellows," and he turned to Davidson and Ches. "If that's not sufficient, I'll be glad to take you thru the cave myself. It's got all the others out here skinned a block."

"We'll certainly avail ourselves of this rare privilege, Robetrs, and you boys are to be congratulated." This Mr. Bedford said as he walked over and grasped Don's hand, and then Davy's.

"Who is this young man, Roberts," he asked as he extended his hand to Ches.

"Sir—that's the celebrated 'Chesso de Greato,' the snake charmer of Smoky Valley. He's acquired about all the fame a fellow can in this world with but one exception: that's becoming a scout. He comes among us for that purpose today."

Ches seemed to resent Don's remarks, and thought he was poking fun at him, and he spoke up rather heatedly:

"Quit yer lyin', or I'll punch yer face fer ye."

The boy's face had reddened with anger, and with clenched fist, walked over and faced Don.

"Why, Ches, old man, what's got in you?"

"Ther devil, 'n whut's more, ye can't mek fun 'er me afore all 'er these hyar guys."

This little episode caused more excitement than the announcement of the discovery of Lost Cave, and Don was quick to put himself right with Ches, and throwing his arm around his shoulders, said:

"Ches, you know I wasn't poking fun at you, old fellow. Can't you take a joke? You'll have to get used to it if you stay among this bunch of fellows very long."

That seemed to be sufficient to reconcile Ches, and the unhappy incident was soon forgotten.

Before dismissing the boys, Mr. Bedford announced that a team would be picked that afternoon to play the Oakland Stars the next day, and that owing to the discovery of Lost Cave, they would prolong their visit a few more days and explore it under the leadership of Don.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GLIMPSE INTO CHES' PAST.

Ches was evidently ashamed of his little demonstration of quick temper displayed before the scouts that afternoon, for he had left the group and was sitting on a stump quite a ways off. His head was bowed and there was a dejected look upon his face. As Don was passing him a few minutes later on his way to the spring, the boy stopped him as he said:

"I's powful sorry fer whut I sed. Don't know why I made sech er fool uv merself."

"Well, it was because you thought I was making fun of you, Ches, but I never had any such idea. I am very sorry it occurred, but let's forget it, and continue to be friends."

"You air th' fust real frien' I ever had," the boy answered with a faint quiver in his voice. "Everbody else jest cussed 'n kicked me aroun'."

Walking with Don to the spring the boy then opened up his heart and told him all about his past life; of his tyrannical and brutal step-father, and how the latter had had him sent to the Reformatory. How one night he slipped away from this institution and walked for many days, finally taking refuge in the home where Don and Davidson had found him on the evening he was bitten by the rattle- asked:

The boy's story found a sympathetic listener in Don, and already the mind of this resourceful scout was devising some plan whereby the unfortunate boy could be helped to the better things in life.

Finally the lad's countenance brightened as he asked:

"Did'n yer Scoutmaster say sumthin' erbout er ball game?"

"Yes," Don replied, "we play the champion team of the County up at the Court House tomorrow. Why—do you play?"

"Ye'd think it. Our team up et ther Reform School didn't loser er single game las' summer. They wuz called ther 'Invincibles' 'n I pitched."

"Ah! is that so? Good news, for Manager Stockton. He hasn't got a decent pitcher with him on this trip. You be on the field at four o'clock this afternoon and we'll look you over and see what you've got."

Leaving Ches at the spring, Don hastened back to camp to find Mr. Bedford. In confidence he told the Scoutmaster about the Moonshine still being operated near the entrance of Lost Cave, and who the owner of it was. The news all but floored Mr. Bedford, who finally exclaimed:

"That means, Roberts, that it will be impossible for us to take our fellows thru there now until the authorities are notified. We can see Sheriff Rat-

cliffe while we are at the Court House tomorrow. He told me only yesterday that he would sure attend the game. Stockton is right again. He predicted this morning that you would beat Devil Jud at his own game, and it begins to look now like you will."

Don then told Mr. Bedford the story of Ches; how they had run in to him on the night he was bitten by the snake; of his following them; and finally Ches' own story related to him a few minutes before.

The Scoutmaster cast an admiring glance at the boy as he extended his hand, saying:

"Roberts, you shall certainly have an Honor Medal for saving that boy's life."

"Indeed I won't, Mr. Bedford. Do you suppose for an instant that I would accept a medal for a good turn?"

"You have the wrong idea, my boy. The granting of a medal is simply recognition of your act by our National Council. No true scout ever thinks of compensation while performing his good turns, and that is just the reason he is rewarded. That reminds me that we are to award some honors at our Council Fire tomorrow night, and I have received them today from Dr. Warbutton, Chairman of our Court of Honor, and I notice that your Eagle Badge is among them. You won't reject that, will you?"

"Hardly," replied the boy, "that's a different proposition."

Stockton was lining up his players for practice in the field adjoining the cave where they were camping, and Mr. Bedford and Don soon joined them. Stockton was soon apprised of Ches' qualifications as a twirler by Don, and it was not long until he was being tried out under the critical eye of the doughty little manager. He was not long in passing judgment, for he soon returned to where Don and Mr. Bedford were standing, and said with beaming countenance: "He's great. Not so much speed, but plenty of benders."

So he had. Baseball was a sort of passion with the lad, and he had mastered both the out and in curve, as well as a fine breaking out-drop. He mixed these in a manner quite deceptive to opposing batsmen. It was this superior brand of pitching that gave the Invincibles the pennant at the State Reformatory, and now he was the scouts' one ace for the big game against the Oakland Stars. Mr. Bedford and Don were soon into the game with the rest of the fellows, and a team was slowly but surely developing which would take measure with the County Champions on the morrow. Thus they practiced until it was too dark to observe the ball, and Manager Stockton calling his players to one side, announced his line-up for the coming game.

"Our best bet for pitcher," he began, "is—hey what's your name?" he asked of Ches.

Ches seemed embarrassed for the moment. Why he was not ready to reveal his true identity was a puzzle to Don, unless it was fear of detection.

"Why his name is Roberts, also," spoke up Don as he came to the lad's rescue. "Put it down C. Roberts, and just chalk mine down D. Roberts."

"Mr. Bedford will cover first; Timmy Sullivan, second; Davidson, third, and D. Roberts, at short. For the out-field we will use the two Roths and Hess. As I am the team's regular catcher at home, I guess it's up to me to do the receiving."

That evening around the camp fire Ches was told in a very practical manner by Scoutmaster Bedford just what it meant to be a scout, and having been instructed while convalescing at Big Bridge by Don and Davidson, he was examined by the Scoutmaster, who then administered the Scout oath, and Ches became a full-fledged scout. Don, who stood as sponsor for him was the first to grasp his hand, as he said:

"Here's hoping that you make good, old chap, and I know you will. Remember always that I am a pullin' for you."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BIG GAME.

A large crowd of fans had gathered at the little Court House to witness the game between the Oaklands and the scouts. The little village could always boast of a big turn out on circus day and on days when their champion team, the Oaklands, had a match game on. Mr. Bedford entertained no thought of winning with his boy team stacked up against a men's team, but he accepted the challenge more to relieve the monotony of camp life for the boys, as well as entertain the natives, who even in this remote corner of the globe were lovers of our National Game.

Ches was on the side lines warming up with all the confidence of a big leaguer. Quite a crowd had gathered just back of him witnessing his display of curves, and commenting on them. One rural fan who had been watching his work with a critical eye for sometime, finally tapped him on the shoulder, and said:

"Sonny, they's shore purty, but ye hain't got zip enuf to 'em. Our boys'll fairly murder them slow, sickly lookin' curves. They'll knock the kiver off'n ther ball ter day. See ef I hain't right."

Ches was aflame in an instant, and turning to the man, replied:

"Say, mister, I'll jest give give ye two bits fer ev'ry one ye kin hit. Cum on now 'n be game."

"I ain't sayin' I kin hit 'em," the man replied, "but I'se speakin' fer ther team."

"Air ye bettin' on that air team?" Ches asked.

"Naw indeedy. Naw sir—I'se a deacon in ther church, 'n I tecks no part in gamblin' what-sum-ever."

"Well, mister, all I'se gotta say ez, ye has moughty pore jedgment fer a deacon. See ef I hain't right atter th' game."

All fans present were not rooters for the home team as could be plainly seen, for Sheriff Ratcliffe was now on the side lines giving quite a vociferous cheer for the "scout boys" as he called them. It was at this juncture that Mr. Mr. Bedford spied him, and taking him to one side, related to him Don's discovery of the illicit still, and revealing to him at the same time the owner of it.

"No 'sprise, sur," he commented, "no 'sprise et all. I 'lowed aller long he wuz makin' thet stuff, but he's er foxy old devil, 'n we never could ketch 'im with ther goods on."

The old sheriff was then silent for a moment, and broke out in a hearty fit of laughter.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Bedford asked.

"Why, sur, I'se laughin' 'bout thet Lost Cave," and he experienced a second spasm of laughter.

"Well, Sheriff, the boy must be right. He claims he came underground for fully five miles, and the cave, he states, is a wonder, and outstrips all the rest of them out here."

"Naw—I'll tell ye whut's ther matter with that air boy, 'n minds yer, I'm not meckin' fun uv 'im—naw sur, he's game ever' inch uv 'im—but thet kid jest got one good whiff uv old Devil Jud's moonshine, 'n he jest 'magined he seed aller these hyar things. Ye know this hyar Carter County moonshine gives a feller a pow'ful 'magination. No mistake erbout et, sur—a pow'ful 'magination."

"Well, you know the old saying: 'Seeing is believing,' so I have given you the tip now and you can go over and see for yourself."

"Shore I'll go, and mark mer wurrud — et ain't goin' ter be eny man's picnic. Ye kin never capture thet old sinner ef he ever gits the drap on ye fust. He don't give ye any time ter repent er make yer will. Age hain't weakened thet hawk eye of his'n—no sur—'n he's as quick on ther trigger ez ther best uv 'em. I'll see ye atter th' game. I see they's gittin' started."

The scouts handicap was not curves, but speed, and tons of it, so it seemed to the batters. The Oakland pitcher was a six-footer, whose pitching arm

seemed to sweep the ground as he delivered the ball. The pellet shot towards the plate with cannon ball velocity,and as straight as an arrow. There was no hugging of the plate by the scouts either, for that was too much like courting the undertaker. The three first batters fanned, and the Oakland fans were cheering themselves hoarse.

"Well, if that guy keeps that pace all the way thru it's nix for us," Manager Stockton remarked quite dolefully to Mr. Bedford, as they were leaving for their respective places on the field.

"Well, Stockton, he may and he may not. My experience as a ball player in the past has taught me that a pitcher who exceeds the speed limit in the first innings is due for a pounding later on."

"That's all right, Mr. Bedford, but that guy may not be exceeding the speed limit."

"Well, in that case the situation is rather gloomy for us, but let's see what Ches is going to do."

Ches was not long in showing them what he could do. He was as calm as a summer morning. His face beamed with confidence, and he began dishing out his offerings like a professional.

The fans were now getting a rare treat of real comedy. Ches would dig his bare toes into the dirt, point his index finger at the plate, lift his left leg, and throw his hands in an arch over his head, and then deliver the ball. During these preliminaries

the Oakland batter was bracing himself confidently to knock the ball a mile. The spheroid once released, wended its way lazily toward the plate. It looked good to the batter, for it was coming slow, and on a bee line for the plate, but just as he brought his bat forward to connect with it, the measley thing took a quick dip to one side, and the batter in his eagerness to kill it, gave a grunt that could be heard on the far side of the field, and missed it a good foot. A perplexed look covered his face, and he turned to see if the ball was in the catcher's mit. "He'll not fool me a second time," thought the batter. Ches, on the delivery of the second ball went thru the same preliminaries. This time the batter was looking for an out-curve, and as he reached out expectantly for it, the ball shot in close to his shoulder, a deceptive in-curve. Mixed with these two varieties was his favorite offering, the out-drop. He could always rely on this one in a pinch. It was amusing to watch this youngster mowing down batter after batter by his wit and cool-headiness.

They were now challenging him to throw a fast one, but Ches only grinned, an continued to dish out those to his own liking. He toyed with them as a trainer would his kennel of trained pups. He was master at all times, and his superb pitching injected confidence in the whole team, but like their opponents they were not hitting the ball either. The big Oak-

land pitcher was stilll breezing along with his lightning speed, and it was the opening of the eigth inning, and not a score had been made by either side. Fans on all sides gave expression to the fact that it was the greatest game ever played in the village.

But the break came in this particular round. Mr. Bedford's quick eye observed the lanky pitcher feeling his right side and flinching slightly as he delivered the ball.

Mr. Bedford called his team's attention to it. They were convinced now that the lanky twirler was no super-man, and was weakening. The psychological effect of this stiuation made them winners. They felt it in every fibre of their being. It had just the opposite effect on the big pitcher. His opponents had discovered that he was "all in." Defeat loomed up before him like a dark cloud. He was beaten and he knew it. In this crisis he walked Don Roberts. Mr. Bedford followed, and sacrificed him to second. Mr. Bedford now took the third base coaching line to direct the plays. Somehow he felt the game must be won in this inning, and he was somewhat downcast when Stockton popped a foul to the catcher. Hess, their weakest batter, was up. The Scoutmaster signaled Don to get a good lead off, and as the pitcher delivered the ball, he was tearing down the path to third. With him

safe at this station, the situation brightened. Hess bit on an easy one, and Mr. Bedford flashed to Don what the team called the "S. O. S. Signal;" that after the second strike to steal home. This opportunity now came for Don, for Hess again stirred the breezes. Watching the pitcher with an eagle eye, Don took a desperate lead off, and the pitcher fired the ball to third (just what the crafty little scout wanted him to do.) He was now half-way between third and home, and the catcher and third-baseman were closing in on him. Don had observed all the afternoon the extreme nervousness of the Oakland catcher, as well as his lack of self-control, and he was banking on this in the crisis which he had just precipitated to help him. Back and forth the ball was tossed. Finally with jaw set and a look of grim determination on his face, he made a wild dash for home. The catcher had him blocked; the ball was in his mit, but as he went to tag him, the ball dropped from his grasp, and rolled over on the diamond, and Don scored. Hess fanned, and Oakland took their turn at the bat.

Ches was not weakening in this fatal round, but his curves were more deceptive than ever, and Oakland with deep humiliation again took the field. The scouts were unable to increase their score in the ninth, and Oakland came up for their turn at the bat in this final round. The Oakland fans who up

until now had been very orderly, began to bully-rag Ches. Epithets of all kinds were hurled at him. When these failed to rattle him they began hurling sticks and rocks. They were swarming out on the diamond like a mob. Their leader was none other than Bub Holbrook, who was saying with a sort of hiss:

"Ef we can't beat ye a playin' ball, we can lick ye."

He now walked up to Ches, and said:

"I know who ye air. I knows ye, don't I?"

Ches bowed his head, and then gave an affirmative nod. It could be seen that this question fired at him by this bully humiliated him.

"I knows ye," he kept repeating.

By this time the mob had taken possession of the diamond and the game was fast degenerating into a free for all fight.

Don Roberts ran over from short to the pitcher's box where Bub Holbrook was facing Ches. He was as pale as a ghost; his jaw was firmly set, and approaching Holbrook, said in scathing tones:

"Lick somebody? You look like licking somebody. You are quite brave indeed with a mob back of you. Come out here and fight me like a man, and I'll give you a worse licking than I gave you up on Tygart Bridge."

Bub tried to ignore him, and turning to the crowd, yelled out in commanding tones:

"Cum on I sez, 'n let's lick 'em."

The mob surged around the boys and Mr. Bedford. The latter was trying to reason with them, but like all mobs they had no ear for reason, and they continued to close in, when all at once a man was seen pushing his way thru the crowd, and yelling: "Stand back." It was Sheriff Ratcliffe, whose presence had a quieting effect on the mob. Addressing them, he said:

"This ez shore a purty way ter treat visitors thet cums ter our town to inter-tain us. Ez this yer Kaintucky hospitality? I'se hyar ter see thet these scout boys git a squar' deal."

He then grabbed Bub Holbrook by the shoulder, saying:

"We know who you air too. I warns ye now ter leave this hyar town, an' leave quick."

"Just a moment, Mr. Sheriff," spoke up Don. "I know you are here to preserve law and order, but I am perfectly willing to settle this whole unhappy affair with that gentleman alone," and he pointed his finger directly in the face of Bub Holbrook.

The old sheriff without giving the matter any deliberation whatever, said:

"Go to et. Ye brag erbout yer Holbrook fightin' blood. Now show et."

Don walked up and faced Bub. The latter began edging his way back thru the crowd like a cur trying to find a hole to hide in. All the while Don was following him, saying:

"Come on, be as bold now as you were ten minutes ago."

Bub made no reply. No doubt he was thinking of those stinging blows dealt him on Tygart Bridge, and he deliberately turned, ran out of the field to the road where he quickly mounted his mule and galloped out of sight. An old native standing near by gave vent to this laconic remark:

"An' ter think I'se lived ter see ther day when a Holbrook wouldn' fight."

This man's family had been in a feud with the Holbrook clan for three generations.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHES SAVED AGAIN.

The Oakland fans were a fickle bunch as was plainly demonstrated at the close of this remarkable game. Ches was their hero now. Those, who a half hour before had pelted him with rocks, were vieing with each other now in paying him homage. Even the rural fan, who predicted before the game that his team would "knock the kiver" off of the ball, was profuse with words of praise. "Yes sur," he was saying, "them air balls jest circled our boys' necks. Never seed sech pitchin' in these hyar parts. No, sur—No, sur—et's 'markable."

Don and Ches were walking together from the game. Just as they were crossing the little swinging bridge which spanned a small creek which ran through the village they saw a man approachng astride a mule. He was big and had red bushy whiskers. The sight of him made Ches turn pale. Don experienced some emotion also on seeing him. The man jumped from his mule grabbed a large stick laying in the road, ran up to the boys as they had just stepped off the bridge, and addressing Ches, said:

"So ye stole er way from ther Reform School without my permission, did ye? Bub Holbrook wuz jest

tellin' me erbout yer loafin' er round down hyar. Now mount thet mule, 'n back hum ye goes whar ye'll find plenty er work waitin' fer ye."

Don knew instantly that it was Ches' step-father, but he recognized him in an entirely different role. He was none other than the man he had seen emerge from the cave with Devil Jud.

Ches threw his head back, braced his shoulders, and there was a look of independence in his eyes, as he said:

"Naw—I'll die fust. Ye kin kill me, but ye can't meck me go back thar ter be kicked er round by sech as ye."

The irate man grabbed the boy by the shoulder, and shoved him out into the middle of the road, and was in the act of lifting him to the mule, when Mr. Bedford and Sheriff Ratcliffe stepped upon the bridge. Don signaled them to hurry, but this was unnecessary, as the cries of the lad now rent the air, and attracted their attention. They ran with increasing speed, and approaching the man, Sheriff Ratcliffe asked what the trouble was.

"No trouble et all," he replied, "jest takin' whut b'longs ter me."

"Air ye his father?" the Sheriff asked.

"I most suttinly am."

"You mean step-father,' Mr. Bedford corrected.

"Whut's ther diff'rence? I'se 'sponsible fer him."

"But," Mr. Bedford continued, "you exercise that responsibility in a most cruel fashion if I am rightly informed."

"Yer bin listenin' ter his lies. He's er bad boy."

It looked as though Ches was doomed to return to his abode of torture, but Don had the trump that would change the whole situation.

"Mr. Sheriff," he spoke up. "Arrest this man. He's a moonshiner. I stand here as a witness to this fact. He is none other than Devil Jud Holbrook's partner. I can lead you to the still if you wish it."

The old sheriff was amazed by the boy's accusation, but not nearly as much so as the moonshiner himself was, and he dug his heels into his mule's flanks, and would have passed on, but the sheriff grabbed the bridle, turned the mule around, as he said:

"Naw—this er way. We hev a coop down hyar in town whar ye gits free meals and lodgin', 'n whar ye'll hev plenty er time ter repent uv yer sins."

Emotion filled the breast of Ches as he realized what his sudden turn in the situation meant to him. Hugging Don with both arms, said, as tears of joy filled his eyes :

"Old pal, ye hev saved me er 'gin.' "

Sheriff Ratcliffe before leaving with his prisoner, informed Mr. Bedford he would be at the caves

early the next morning where he hoped to bag bigger game. He commanded his prisoner to dismount, and as their faces came closer together, the old sheriff exclaimed: "Lawd er mussy, I tho't I knowed them air eyes. So ets you, Ben McGlone? When did yer grow that crap er whiskers?" With that they turned off the main road down a little path which was a short cut leading to the County Jail.

Mr. Bedford and the two boys had now overtaken the other scouts at the edge of the village, and were soon hiking at a good gait, hoping to reach camp before dark. As they thus hiked they soon broke up into little groups which is a natural consequence on scout hikes. Don and Mr. Bedford were now side by side and reviewing the thrilling and exciting events of the day. It seemed strange that all these centered around Ches, and both Scoutmaster and scout rejoiced over the glory he had achieved that day, as well as his miraculous escape from the clutches of his cruel step-father, Ben McGlone.

The Scoutmaster then shifted the conversation to Don himself when he said: "Roberts, this has been a great trip for you, hasn't it? Since leaving home you have been captured by an outlaw, and made your escape; licked a bully; saved the life of a boy from snake-bite; discovered a cave; turned over to the authorities two of the worst outlaws in the

County, and scored the winning run in this afternoon's game. That's not all. On tomorrow night you are to receive the Eagle Decoration. What more could you ask for?

The boy hung his head for a moment. He was not the type whose head was easily turned; not the type to be mastered by conceit and self-importance. He finally raised his head, and replied: "You ask me what more could I ask for? Just one thing, Mr. Bedford. Means within my possession to help that kid," and he pointed in front of him to Ches. That kid's homeless, practically friendless, and deep down in his heart he wants to do the square thing; he wants to be clean. What show is there for him when we pick up and leave this country? Wasn't he great today? Stood up there just like a man and had those big stiffs eatin' out of his hands. All their rough stuff didn't unnerve him in the least, and that quick temper of his he kept under control at all times. I say that's the stuff in a fellow that makes a good scout."

It certainly is, Roberts, and I, like you, hope we can in some way help this little fellow to something better, and give him an environment that will fortify him in his fight to be a true scout."

CHAPTER XIX.

DON'S DAY OF TRIUMPH.

Faithful to his promise, Sheriff Ratcliffe appeared at the caves the next morning bright and early, and after the scout's had eaten a hastily prepared breakfast, all set out to explore Lost Cave, led by Don, Davidson, and Ches, the explorers. It was decided to enter from the rear and go straight on thru to Dry Branch entrance where the moonshine still was located. Sheriff Ratcliffe had brought three additional officers with him, and all heavily armed.

They soon reached the little opening in the ground, and each one was let down into the cavern by means of a rope tied securely to a tree. All safely in, the tramp underground began. The skeptics were experiencing a peculiar sensation as their doubts began to roll away, and they marvelled at the wonders of this newly-found cave. The old sheriff, the most pronounced skeptic of them all, was amazed by what he was witnessing.

It was a day of triumph for Don. He had been scoffed at, and ridiculed by his companions because of his deep-rooted conviction that Lost Cave was more than a myth. He was showing them now that he was more than a dreamer, he was a discoverer.

When the first streak of daylight, shining thru the Dry Branch entrance became visible, the boys were sent by Sheriff Ratcliffe down one of the side corridors, while he, Mr. Bedford, and the other three officers continued on their way to the entrance. Here they found the still which the Sheriff immediately wrecked. Large quantities of moonshine liquor was discovered stored away in a passage leading off to the right near the entrance. As yet the operators of the still were not visible. The sheriff felt that parties other than Holbrook and McGlone were interested, and he expected a pitch battle with the whole gang, especially if the news of McGlone's arrest had reached them. It evidently had not.

The sheriff then decided to go to the home of Devil Jud and arrest him there. He urged Mr. Bedford to take the scouts on back to camp as they might be placed in a false light by appearing with him on such an occasion, and he wanted to do nothing to hurt the good name of the movement. He was under obligations to them now for their information. Mr. Bedford heeded this advice, and he and the scouts followed the officers down to Tygart River, crossed over at the point where Big Bend Creek empties into it, and intended taking the county road here back to camp, but just as they reached the little cross roads store, whom should they see sitting on the porch but Devil Jud Holbrook. Sheriff Ratcliffe and

the officers immediately raised their pistols, and leveled at the old feudist on first sight, and commanded him to submit to arrest. But Devil Jud's trusty gun was up as quick as theirs. There was a flash, a deafening report, and the old feudist and moonshiner lurched sideways, caught at one of the upright beams of the porch, swayed backward against the side of the building, and leaned there. He was making a desperate effort to raise his gun. He stared at the officers with wide, horrified eyes, and then his gun fell away with a heavy thud on the floor. He took a swift pace forward striving to speak, but he choked instead, and so choking, sank to his knees, and stretched himself face downward on the floor, and lay there very still and quiet. The store door was opened and several men filed out, but none with sufficient courage to take up the fight with the officers. The latter walked over and were soon busy making preparations to take the body to its home up Big Bend. Mr. Bedford now reached the side of the sheriff and expressed his regret that the arrest terminated so tragically.

"Don't let thet worry ye'" the old sheriff remarked rather indifferently. "You see this hyar gun," and he passed the old feudist's gun to Mr. Bedford. "How many notches air cut on et?"

"Twelve."

"Thet means thet th' ole sinner hez kilt twelve men durin' his life, but he'll kill no mo'."

"Surely not," replied Mr. Bedford.

"Yas sur—He's boasted uv et, 'n he'd er kilt me ef I hadn't got ther drop on 'im."

Mr. Bedford hurried back to where the scouts were standing. They were excited over the scene just enacted, and he regretted that they were witnesses of it. They now resumed their hike back to camp, reaching there in time for noon mess.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TREASURE.

That last night around the Council fire at Carter Caves was one never to be forgotten by Scoutmaster Bedford and his loyal band of scouts, for it climaxed the greatest trip of their lives. Mr. Bedford arose and in a few chosen words reviewed their trip from the time they had left home until the present hour. "We have all been drawn closer together," he was saying, "and we have been like one big family. We have shared our good things together. We have had good, wholesome fun, and in all our games we have proven ourselves true scouts in the fullest sense of the term. On this last night I have a number or honors to confer, and as I call your names please come forward. I have First Class badges for Scouts Davidson, Sullivan, and Hess. The boys stepped forward, saluted, and received their honors. Mr. Bedford emphasized the importance of First Class training, and then congratulated the boys.

"Next on my list is Scout Don Roberts, who receives the highest honor awarded by our National Court of Honor: the Eagle Rank." Don stepped forward, and stood before his Scoutmaster. The red glow of the campfire was shining full upon his coun-

tenance, and he looked supremely happy. The Scoutmaster knowing his disposition did not embarrass him with any lengthy congratulatory remarks. Besides, the badge of this rank spoke for itself. He merely pinned it on his breast, and grasped his hand in hearty congratulation.

The next honor is for Scout Hoover." Fatty looked up with surprise. He hesitated a moment, but finally walked to the front, saluted the Scoutmaster, and stood at rigid attention. Mr. Bedford reached down in the grass behind him, produced a big watermelon. "Scout Hoover you have been declared champion eater on this trip, and in recognition of this achievement, I take great pleasure in presenting you with the prize which has been awarded by your fellow-campers." He placed the watermelon in Fatty's hands amid the cheers and laughter of the crowd.

"Scout Ches Roberts."

Ches was seized with an attack of bashfulness and bucked, but Don soon had him by the hand, and led him up to the Scoutmaster. Just as Mr. Bedford started addressing him, the sound of horses' hoofs were heard. The attention of the campers was directed to a rider now approaching. It was Sheriff Ratcliffe. Drawing up in front of the fire, he began addressing Mr. Bedford:

"Sur et mought 'sprise ye when I tells ye thet

thet old codger didn't die. Naw, sur—blame et, he raised up soon atter we'uns got 'im hum, en axed fer a drink."

"Do you mean Devil Jud?"

"'Zackly so, sur. Ye can't kill his kind, but one thing sartain he'll land in ther pen when he duz git well. By ther way yer boy thet discivered thet still ez due some sev'ral hunder'd dollars reward, 'n ef he'll jest walk up hyar, I'll giv' et ter him."

Mr. Bedford signaled to Don, who arose and walked over to where the sheriff was sitting. When he extended the bills to Don, the boy locked his hands behind him as he said:

"Mr. Sheriff, I searched all thru that cave this morning for that treasure which was supposed to be hidden in there, but no where was it to be seen. It worried me because the cave seemed incomplete without the treasure. At last you come with it, and my mind is eased. But I must refuse to accept what is rightfully yours. You risked your life this afternoon to make the arrest, therefore you must keep the reward. So, Mr. Sheriff, I take great pleasure in presenting you with the "Treasure of Lost Cave."

The old sheriff swore he wouldn't take it, but Don was equally as persistent that he should, so he stuck the money back in his pocket, bade them all good by, stuck spurs to his horse, and galloped off.

The Council Fire was resumed, and Ches was again called for, and the Scoutmaster pinned on his left breast the tender-foot badge, but there was not the expression of joy on his face that Mr. Bedford had anticipated, and he thought he knew why as he studied the lad's face closer. Could he be thinking of tomorrow? The day when he must bid adieu to those who had brought the only real joy into his life. To face the future without them seeemd a cross almost too heavy to bear. All this the Scoutmaster read in the boy's eyes, and before the lad could return to his place around the fire, Don arose and stood by his side, as he said:

"Fellows: I want to read you a letter which I received from home today," and he reached in his pocket for it. He began reading:

Dear Son:

I have your letter, and note your request. Both your mother and I have given the matter our careful consideration, and have decided to let you bring the young man home with you, and if he proves to be all you say he is, why we may adopt him as 'your brother.'

Trusting we shall see you soon, I am,

Your affectionate,

DAD.

"Fellows: that young man Dad speaks of is Ches," and he threw his arm around the lad, continuing: "and from this night forth he is my brother, and the honor's all mine."

A mighty cheer went up from the group, and arising from their places around the campfire, they grabbed hold of each other's hands and formed a circle around Don and his newly-adopted brother as they sang quite lustily:

"For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
A jolly good fellow is he."

"Who?" yelled the leader, when the song was finished.

"Don," came the mighty refrain.

"Who?" he cried out again.

"Ches," they answered.

It was a night of merriment for those whose songs and yells filled the air.

It was more to Ches—it was a new start in life for him.

THE END.

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